

**LANGUAGE AND IDEOLOGY IN THE POETRY OF
JOSÉ EMILIO PACHECO**

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ABSTRACT

Jeffrey Lyman Birdsong: Language and Ideology in the Poetry of José Emilio Pacheco
(Under the direction of Dr. Alicia Rivero)

The poetry of José Emilio Pacheco expresses an ongoing inquiry into the relationship between language and the existence of violence in the universe. While Pacheco's investigation fails to provide definitive solutions to the problems of this world, such as environmental catastrophe, war, famine, etc., Pacheco's poetry advances an ideological position that foregrounds the limits of human subjectivity and epistemology. For him, moral concepts such as "good" and "evil" have no real, predetermined meaning which can be discovered and shared. Instead, these concepts often represent the subjective desires of a few individuals to control and dominate their fellow human beings as well as the outside environment. Language becomes the opportunistic tool through these subjective concepts are formed and imparted to other humans. Therefore, these moral perceptions establish the ethical and political attitudes that ultimately influence and affect world events. Consequently, all people, as language-bearing beings, are inescapably complicit in the power relations that they wish to contest. Recognizing this, Pacheco's poems suggest an ideological program that recognizes the interdependency of all the agents of the universe (people, animals, plants, and inorganic objects).

Metapoetic aspects, Los elementos de la noche, represent the act of linguistic communication as the clash of signifiers occurring in the mind's unconscious. Consequently, the separation between the conscious and unconscious realms creates a

divided sense of awareness in the human individual. As a result, Pacheco expresses an ideology whereby language becomes intricately tied to the divided existence of human beings. Such an ideology is consistent with a postmodern sensibility, but it also suggests similarities with the works of French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan, which other studies of Pacheco have overlooked. Therefore, this dissertation addresses the basic principles of Pacheco's ideology in Los elementos de la noche (1963), El reposo del fuego (1966), No me preguntes cómo pasas el tiempo (1969), Desde entonces (1980), and El silencio de la luna (1992) using the ideas of Jacques Lacan and postmodern thought.

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CHAPTER I
LANGUAGE AND IDEOLOGY IN THE POETRY OF
JOSÉ EMILIO PACHECO

En inglés <<yo>> es decir <<I>>,
se escribe siempre con mayúscula.
En español la lleva pero invisible.
<<Yo>> por delante
y las demás personas del verbo
disminuidas siempre.
“<<Yo>> con mayúscula,” Miro la tierra (1986)

¿Quién soy:
el guarda de mi hermano o aquel a quien
/ adiestraron
para aceptar la muerte de los demás
no la propia muerte?
¿A nombre de qué puedo condenar a muerte
a otros por lo que son o piensan?
Pero ¿Cómo dejar impunes
la tortura o el genocidio o el matar el hambre?
“Fin de siglo,” Desde entonces (1980)

The purpose of my study is to show that the poetry of José Emilio Pacheco advances an ideological position that foregrounds the precariousness of human subjectivity and epistemology. The term “ideology” has its early roots associated with the French Revolution. Philosopher, Antoine Destutt de Tracy (1754-1836), initially used the term to show how all of our human behavior is derived from our will to transact with the world around us. He used this basis to promote a society that granted the individual unrestricted

freedom to negotiate these transactions, which he believed to be the freest and the fullest expression of ideology (ix-xv).

Following Destutt de Tracy's work with ideology, Karl Marx demonstrated that one's ideology was intricately connected to the attitude of the privileged class toward the productive relationship of other individuals. In The German Ideology (1846), Marx defined ideology as the ruling ideas of "ruling class" (253). Louis Althusser expanded this viewpoint to include the unconscious and conscious ways that people interacted with each other. In "Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays," Althusser comments: "All ideology represents in its necessarily imaginary distortion not the existing relations of production ... but above all the imaginary relationship of individuals to the relations of production and the relations that derive from them" (164-65).

In the late twentieth century, language, itself as the primary tool for communication, increasingly became the focal point for discussions on ideology. Many other thinkers, impacted by poststructuralist works of philosophers, such as Jacques Lacan, avoided understanding ideology strictly in socioeconomic terms of class struggle, and have pointed out how speaking individuals are complicitous in ideological communication by speaking from within the [ideological] system that they wish to critique. In other words, one cannot escape ideology, and in communication, one engages in ideological expression. Therefore, "ideology," as I plan to use the term, takes on important subjective and epistemological considerations that are intricately connected to the way people interact in a social manner with the rest of the world.

By relating language to ideology, I wish to say that Pacheco's texts recognize language's predominant position in constructing moral perceptions of good and bad that

people inevitably employ in their conflictive relationship with the other members of our global community (i.e. other humans, animals, plants, etc.). These moral perceptions establish the ethical and political attitudes that ultimately influence and affect world events. Therefore, politics and ethics become significantly tied to humans as speaking and writing beings. Consequently, all humans are inescapably complicit in the power relations that they wish to contest; recognizing this, Pacheco's poems suggest an ideological program that emphasizes the interdependency of all agents of the universe (people, animals, plants, and inorganic objects), as we will see in Los elementos de la noche (1963), El reposo del fuego (1966), No me preguntes cómo pasas el tiempo (1969), Desde entonces (1980) and El silencio de la luna (1994).

José Emilio Pacheco was born in Mexico City in 1939. In addition to twelve books of original poems, he has published three books of short stories and one novel. Pacheco has written a number of essays, for which he won the National Journalism Prize in 1980. In a 1966 review of the new generation of Mexican poets, Octavio Paz compares Pacheco to other aspiring Mexican poets from his generation, such as Marco Antonio Montes de Oca, Gabriel Zaid, and Homero Aridjis, each of who began publishing the bulk of their works in the sixties ("Poesía en movimiento" 26). In a rare interview in 1965, Pacheco identified Octavio Paz and Jorge Luis Borges, perhaps above all other authors, as having a significant impact on his writing (Narradores 246). In an autobiographical essay written more than twenty years later, Pacheco corroborates the impact of these two writers, attributing the discovery of Paz and Borges, as well as Martín Luis Guzmán, to an influential, childhood teacher, José Enrique Moreno (Spanish American 631). Pacheco has been critical of the Mexican government, particularly in relation to the PRI's

(Partido Revolucionario Institucional) involvement in the student massacre at Tlatelolco of 1968. In addition, he has criticized the United States for its involvement in Vietnam and its economic domination of world markets. We will see some of these aspects in the dissertation. However, critics have been careful not to associate the Mexican poet to any particular ideological group. Luis Antonio de Villena observes that Pacheco avoids “enslaving” doctrines. Villena says that Pacheco is neither a Marxist nor a proponent of the Soviet brand of communism termed “real socialism,” although some of his poems are precursors to environmental and anti-consumerism commentary (31-33).

Several critical essays and dissertations, such as those by Jose Miguel Oviedo, Thomas Hoeksema and Ron Friis, have addressed notions of subjectivity and intertextuality in Pacheco’s poetry and others by Luis Antonio de Villena and Mary Docter have underscored the presence of civic and social concerns. In contrast, my dissertation demonstrates how Pacheco’s investigations into the linguistic signifier are intricately connected to both the discursive formation of human subjective consciousness as well as ongoing international problems (war, famine, environmental destruction, etc.). Unlike other studies, my dissertation also shows how Pacheco’s texts lend themselves to Lacanian analysis in a way that more clearly reveals the ideology that runs throughout Pacheco’s poetry. For example, in Los elementos Pacheco demonstrates how people enter into language through a mirror-like interaction with the outside world. By his second book, El reposo, he shows how human symbolic consciousness as language speaking beings forms moral constructs that ultimately influence and affect world events such as the Spanish conquest of the Americas. Critics have generally overlooked a number of distinct Lacanian concepts in Pacheco like his ideas on language and desire as

well as their mediation of the relationship between the subject and the outside world. Each of these concepts is intimately involved in Pacheco's understanding of the discursive formation of human consciousness and is directly or indirectly expressed throughout his poetry.

Furthermore, by evaluating Pacheco's texts from a Lacanian perspective, my dissertation will elucidate the political and social attitudes present in Pacheco's poetry during four distinct periods of his work. We shall see in the first period, which includes Los elementos de la noche (1963) and El reposo del fuego (1966), how the speaker exhibits an attitude of inquiry and investigation in establishing an elementary set of ideological principles. The second period, which begins with No me preguntes cómo pasas el tiempo in 1969, is marked by one of muted optimism as the poet experiments with an authoritative voice in ways that realign the speaking subject in a more harmonious relationship with the outside world. The third period continues many of the same literary strategies of the prior period, but distinguishes itself by the pervasive sense of despair that emanates from the speaker's voice. Although this atmosphere of despair reveals itself at times throughout Pacheco's poetic corpus, it is most notable in this third period, in which the poet expresses a resigned attitude toward the omnipresence of violence and a dire loss of faith in poetry, love and art as redemptive mediums through which he may find some sense of worth and relief. This period is most clearly reflected in Pacheco's sixth book, Desde entonces (1980).

The profound sense of despair apparent in Desde entonces is already dissipating in his following book, Los trabajos del mar (1983). The fourth period reflects the poet's acceptance that literary innovation alone will not produce revolutionary changes in the

world. The poet of this fourth and final period is now more willing to accept art, poetry and myth as great teachers of human values that may indirectly encourage a more peaceful co-existence between human beings. El silencio de la luna (1994) represents this fourth period in its fullness and continues through Pacheco's final book of poetry, Siglo pasado, published in 2002. In my opinion, the books I select for the study of these four periods in the subsequent chapters are those which best reflect Pacheco's ideology for each period.

José Miguel Oviedo lucidly recognizes a key moral and philosophical dilemma that Latin American poets of the sixties were confronting with respect to postmodern influences coming from North America and Europe. They were wary of political commentary and the social and political pressures to address the dire conditions of their native countries, which, excluding exceptional cases, were riddled with poverty, corruption and either political totalitarianism or governmental instability. While Oviedo ascribes "la ambivalencia moral y la voluntaria in-trascendencia estética" (Historia 386) to postmodernity, he also sees that Latin American poets were finding themselves caught up in the social problems of their region: "si ya no era tan fácil responder con una simple poesía comprometida, tampoco era fácil escribir sin dar cuenta de que era participante de la revolución, un exiliado, una víctima de las dictaduras, o simplemente un hombre tocado y marginado por la Historia" (421).

The poems of Mexican writer, José Emilio Pacheco, demonstrate the political implications of both extremes reflected in Oviedo's comment. On the one hand, his poetry recognizes the implicit power relations hidden in language, but, on the other, it acknowledges the need to protest against the social and political maladies of his time. In

the first epigraph, from “<<Yo>> con mayúscula,” we see how the position of the first person pronoun, “yo,” maintains a hierarchically superior position to all of the other grammatical “persons” of the sentence. Language becomes the deceptively neutral modus through which the speaking individual puts his or her own ideological views on center stage at the expense of the concerns of the other members of society.

Similarly, many of Pacheco’s poems show how language aids in the formation of illusory systems of subjectivity (i.e. how one sees oneself) and epistemology (i.e. how one understands the rest of the world) that help frame the way people develop moral notions of good or bad. In place of these anthropocentric notions, many of Pacheco’s poems posit a poetic world where violence and destruction are an innately central aspect of the universe, a necessary event for the latter’s own self-perpetuation. For example, the volcano, a primary symbol in Pacheco’s work, is the volatile melting pot where matter converges together and is destroyed, but it is also what coalesces to produce new land, or new “hogueras” (El reposo “I.1,” “I.15”). Also in El reposo, he shows how human beings engaging in warfare, or how individuals (for example, the Spanish viceroy) caught in their routine struggle for personal advancement, relate on levels of tension that lead to destruction (“III.6”). However, there is also the production of new or creative outcomes (“III.12”).

Pacheco’s poems consistently express derision toward belief systems that advocate uncomplicated notions of morality. His poetry suggests that ideologies with grand pretensions of betterment like capitalism, Christianity, or scientific discourse not only hide their own discursive precariousness, they also contribute to the propagation of violence in their imposition of one autocratic belief system over alternative ideologies.

For Pacheco, one of the key dangers of these forms of discourse is how they create an illusion of objective, non-debatable truths, instead of showing how language constructs a multitude of competing realities, all of which are subjective in nature.

By demonstrating language's complicity in constituting our thought systems, Pacheco's poems toy with ideas of moral relativism. Although in the second cited passage of the epigraph, taken from Pacheco's sixth book of poems, Desde entonces, also demonstrates a similar skepticism toward the pretensions of truth of authoritative discourses, it also points out the sometimes enormous social implications of an ideological program that advances moral relativism. The poem's speaker asks under what authority ("¿a nombre de qué...?") can one condemn to death his brother's murderers for who they are (por lo que son" 6) or for what they think ("por lo que ... piensan" 6). In my opinion, the passage asks under what moral code can we condemn others based on their personal differences from ourselves ("who they are) or their particular ideology ("what they think"). He wonders whether he should seek vengeance for the past aggressions against his "brother" or fight to defend his own life. Consciously aware of the social consequences of one's failure to intervene directly in the ensuing violence, the speaker asks, alternatively, how one can allow genocide and torture to continue.

In his first two volumes of poetry, the poetic world that underlies Pacheco's developing ideology reveals to us a physical universe whose elements collide and separate in a constant field of tension. As the poetic speaker seeks to understand the evolving world that surrounds him, he observes that the violent interaction of cosmic entities (wind, rocks, water, etc.) is paradoxically necessary for the universe's own

continued existence.¹ Many critics like José Miguel Oviedo, Mario Benedetti, Michael Doudoroff and Thomas Hoeksema have attributed the inspiration for this cosmic world to the Greek philosopher, Heraclitus.² Hoeksema even extends the importance of Heraclitus beyond Pacheco's first two volumes of poetry, pointing out that the Heraclitian principles of harmony and strife continue to be one of the primary motifs throughout Pacheco's poetic corpus (4).

It is not difficult to understand why the ideas of Heraclitus were of interest to Pacheco. In the latter half of the twentieth century, pre-Socratic Greek thinkers like Heraclitus were becoming increasingly attractive to modern thinkers, Western and non-Western alike, who were attempting to loosen the grip that Platonic systems of thought had held over the Western world. I have primarily in mind European thinkers like Martin Heidegger (Being and Time) and Jacques Lacan ("Function of Field of Speech and Language" in Ecrits), as well as the Mexican poet, Octavio Paz (his interview with Carlos Monsiváis). Each of these thinkers saw in Heraclitus' ideas an alternative to the Platonic tradition that emphasized rational discourse, which, from their points of view, had led to

¹ In most of Pacheco's poetry, the poetic speaker operates under a number of guises and personae. However, these personae tend to be gendered as male. In "Éxodo" of Los elementos, the speaker is "el héroe" (Tarde 3). In El reposo, the speaker observes: "Soy y no soy aquel que te ha esperado" ("II.2" 14), also suggesting the masculine gender. Therefore, throughout my study, I will use the masculine gender as a point of reference when referring to the poems' poetic speaker. In "Éxodo" of Los elementos, the speaker is "el héroe" (Tarde 3). In El reposo, the speaker observes: "Soy y no soy aquel que te ha esperado" ("II.2" 14), also suggesting the masculine gender.

² The sovereign, cosmic force takes the form of a Heraclitian system of order or *logos*. In his commentary to Heraclitus: Translation and Analysis, Dennis Sweet observes that for Heraclitus the *logos* is paradoxically "the underlying unity in the apparent diversity and change in the world" (57). The world is a result of the contrary principles of opposition and strife (59). Heraclitus shows that most people live ignorant of the "rational structure of the world ... and fail to see beyond their own limited perspectives" (64). Similarly, in his first book, Los elementos de la noche (1963), Pacheco shows the creation of the poem as a collision of opposing forces in "Canción para escribirse en una ola" and "Los elementos de la noche." In his second book, El reposo del fuego, Pacheco explicitly refers to Heraclitus in his poem, "Don de Heraclito."

a hypersensitive awareness of being as well as a corresponding sense of separation from the outside world. Therefore, Heraclitus' focus on paradox became an attractive alternative to the traditional Western emphasis on monolithic, Platonic modes of understanding the world (e.g. science, humanist philosophy, etc.).

Martin Heidegger, who accommodated Heraclitus' use of paradox in significant portions of his philosophical theories such as in his 1951 essay titled, "*Logos* (Heraclitus, fragment B 50)," criticized humanistic notions present in Western thought since Plato and Socrates that led to a "forgetting being," of which a "rational domination of nature and human beings is the culmination" (Best 22). Lacan, who translated Heidegger's seminal essay on the *logos* into French in the first edition of the journal La Psychanalyse (1956), has been credited with combining structural linguistics and Freudian psychoanalysis. For Lacan, the act of signification, the production of meaning, proceeds in a way that closely resembles Heraclitus' notion of the *logos*. On a number of occasions, Lacan also linked the subject's desire to the *logos*. For example, in "The Signification of the Phallus," he says: "The phallus is the privileged signifier of that mark in which the role of the *logos* is joined with the advent of desire" (Ecrits 287). Later in the same essay, Lacan reiterates the connection between the phallic signifier and the Heraclitian concept of *logos*: "The function of the phallic signifier touches here on its most profound relation in which the Ancients embodied the *Nous* and the *Logos*" (291).

While many critics have been quick to point out the Heraclitian influences in Pacheco's poetry, they have overlooked a number of distinct Lacanian concepts present throughout his publishing corpus, particularly in his first volume of poems, Los elementos. Although the Heraclitian motifs of dispersion and order clearly produce

parallels with Lacanian concepts of separation and wholeness, Pacheco's texts go beyond a mere recycling of pre-Socratic, Greek thought.³ While Heraclitus had no theory of linguistics incorporated into his body of works, many poems of Los elementos represent an outside force, resembling Heraclitus' *logos*, acting through signifiers in the mind's unconscious. For example, "Canción para escribirse en una ola," "Egloga octava," and "Estancias" use allusions to a mirror reminiscent of Lacan to reflect the formation of our subjective consciousness as a consequence of its interaction with the outer world.

In his seminal essay, "The Mirror Stage," Lacan proposes that at an early point in our lives, human individuals pass from a stage of wholeness with a maternal figure to a stage of separation. The separation or absence delivers the individual into a symbolic stage, where language becomes the substitute through which the child may express its solitary condition by constructing a unified notion of its own individual identity. Desire, like Heraclitus' *logos*, becomes an incessant force acting on the individual that moves it toward interaction with the other members of the universe.

Many of the poems in Los elementos show linguistic signification following closely on the heels of a mirror experience like Lacan's Mirror Stage. Furthermore, the poems of Los elementos recall Lacan by repeatedly equating the outside world, the external "Other," to a rather ambiguous sense of absence or lack. We see this notion of absence throughout Los elementos. For example, the book's title poem, "Los elementos de la noche" repeatedly uses a Lacanian sense of negation as the basis of expression: "Nada se

³ Perhaps ironically, Pacheco, the "intertextual" poet, makes no direct references to Lacan in his poems. Furthermore, he refrains from providing any critical analysis of his own poems except for what we may see in the poems themselves. He does provide a brief introduction to his collective works in Tarde o temprano. However, I argue that that Pacheco's notions of "subjectivity," "desire," "other" as well as his skepticism toward the fixed relationship between signifier and signified do suggest a significant indebtedness to Lacan throughout his works.

restituye, nada otorga el verdor a la selva calcinada” (21).⁴ Similarly, in “El sol oscuro,” Pacheco contrasts the sun, metaphor for both human and poetic creation, to the “oquedad, desierto muro o llama detenida” (15). These references take on Lacanian significance in as much as there is no notion of a transcendental correspondence between the poetic speaker and the outside world as night and death represent for the speaker “su límite y tortura” (16). Therefore, even in Los elementos, we can see emerging a tentative ideology based on the conflictive relationship between the self and the other mediated by language.⁵

By foregrounding language’s role in mediating the relationship between the self and the other, Pacheco’s ideological commentary shares many affinities with Western concepts of postmodernity that attempt to reject master narratives or that intentionally avoid openly political commentary. In The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, Jean-François Lyotard has defined postmodern as an “incredulity toward metanarratives” that “legitimizes itself with reference to a metadiscourse of this kind of making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative” (xxiv). In Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, Frederic Jameson says that postmodernism

⁴ The poems written by Pacheco through 1980 were substantially reedited for his collection, Tarde o temprano (1980). These poems were revised a second time and included with subsequent volumes of poetry through 2000 in Tarde o temprano: poemas [1958-2000]. In his preface to the 1980 edition, the poet states his belief that the poems continue to be essentially the same poems. Except for sections of my third chapter, where I review both the original and revised texts, I have elected to cite the poems from the 2000 edition unless specifically stated otherwise. While I do not rule out the possibility that continued revisions will be made by Pacheco, my focus on his most recent collection of poems allows my analysis to address the whole body of work of the poet as the poet envisions it to be in its most recent and complete form.

⁵ Although Hugo Verani has not focused on the political implications of the self/other dialectic, he has also pointed out the importance of the notions of “self” and “other,” which he states are present throughout Pacheco’s poetry (“La voz complementaria” 281). For purposes of my discussion in this chapter, I will define the “other” as any of the particularized or collective images of the outside world that reaffirm one’s own separate existence as a subject. This outside image may include the mirror reflection that the subject sees outside of himself or herself seen as the Other.

distinguishes itself for its kitsch, a type of parody that has lost any hope of profound change (17). However, much of the “incredulity toward metanarratives” associated with postmodern thinkers is already present in Lacan. By placing the act of signification in the inaccessible realm of the unconscious, Lacan similarly disputed the individual’s inability to fully express himself. In Ecrits, Lacan states: “Human language signifies “something quite other than what it says” (84).

The applicability of postmodern ideas, which originated in North American and European circles, to the study of Latin American texts has touched off a series of debates. Some critics have asked how Latin America could be considered postmodernist if the region has not experienced the cultural and economic benefits associated with North American and European modernity. In Archival Reflections, Santiago Juan-Navarro praises the postmodern ideas of Ihab Hassan, Brian McHale and Linda Hutcheon, but he criticizes these writers for failing to provide a specific framework within which postmodern texts fit in postcolonial societies (34). In addition to my study of Pacheco, I add the relevant ideas from postmodern thinkers, Jean-Francoise Lyotard, such as his rejection of metanarratives, and Linda Hutcheon, such as her notion of “complicitous critique” (2, 9). Consistent with the comments of Juan-Navarro, this dissertation points out the particular context in which the postmodern aspects of Pacheco’s texts appear, by identifying points of consistency and difference between Pacheco and the two postmodern critics with respect to the social and political environment in which Pacheco has written his works.

In spite of similarities, the persistent concerns for the social well-being of humanity apparent in many of Pacheco’s poems make it difficult for his poetry to be classified

strictly along Western definitions of postmodernism which tend to eschew political commentary. His poetry is consistent with what critic Donald Shaw sees as an ongoing social dialogue in the Latin American novel that defies many Western notions critical of old-style mimesis. Pacheco's poetry also conforms to Shaw's observation of Latin American literature as a type of "mixed coding" that doesn't "postulate a loss or flattening of the distinction between signifier and signified or between the text of a novel and the world that surrounds it" (174). Pacheco both accepts and subverts traditional notions of a unified subject. He also accepts a partial correspondence between the linguistic signifier and its signified. For example, poems like "Lavandería" (Desde entonces) show the subject as a series of disconnected "otros-yo" (9) while "Luz y silencio" (Los elementos) expresses the idea that everything that one has believed is false. Meanwhile, other poems like "Ya todos saben para quién trabajan" of No me preguntes exhibit a unified speaker that confidently asserts his understanding about how all people, including himself, are ultimately intertwined in an economic system that ultimately benefits the transnational corporations of the Western world. In addition, his poetry recognizes that postmodern skepticism toward master narratives can also be understood as an ideology with significant political and social consequences.

Certainly, the social and political events in Latin America and Mexico during the sixties encouraged the expression of political themes that might explain an underlying social preoccupation even in Pacheco's most "postmodern" poems. José Quiroga cites a general pattern of social and political unrest throughout Europe and North and South America, identifying the Cuban Revolution of 1958 as one of several events that catalyzed the production of social and politically oriented poetry that surfaced in Latin

America during the sixties (352). Although Mexican poetry was perhaps not as intimately affected by the promise offered by an alternative form of government in Cuba, both Norma Klahn and Adriana García have observed an increased social involvement in Mexican verse during the sixties; among other factors, both attribute this to the growing disillusionment with Mexico's ruling political party, the PRI. Klahn and García give special attention to the appearance of a group of five Mexican poets, known as La espiga amotinada, who published two volumes of collective poems, many of which openly expressed political themes. In his article on Mexican poetry of the sixties, Pacheco gives qualified praise to the political tenor of La espiga, commenting that the current state of affairs in the world made the political commentary of contemporary poetry necessary ("Aproximación" 218).

Beginning with his first poetic publications, Pacheco's poetry acknowledges these two separate and sometimes contradictory ideological paths that I outlined earlier: one that highlights the discursive basis of ideological systems echoing notions of moral relativism, and a second path that recognizes the obligation of the writer to confront the social issues of his time, as we will see in my dissertation. My first chapter analyzes the ideological principles developing in his first two books of poetry, Los elementos de la noche and El reposo del fuego. In Los elementos, there is a mirror-like interaction between the poetic speaker's acquisition of language and the other elements of the environment. When read from a psychoanalytical perspective, we understand how the speaker's entry into symbolic existence (i.e. the speaker's use of language) is intimately connected to a pervasive sense of separation that alienates the subject from the rest of the

world. The subject appears driven to return to a mythic state of wholeness, but this anterior sense of totality is associated with a lack or absence.

Although the hermetic quality of the poems makes it difficult to immediately identify the political implications of Los elementos, the dialectic of self versus other, which is constantly mediated by language, is presented in a much more political context in El reposo. For example, El reposo shows how the fundamental force of the universe, which he links to Heraclitus' notion of the *logos*, functions as a type of thirst or desire that propels human individuals toward confrontation with the other in their quest for satisfaction. Systems of epistemology become increasingly complicit in allowing individuals to impose one set of beliefs on the beliefs of other people. Rather than reflecting an underlying truth, ideologies are shown as tenuously framed by the signifying elements of language, whose meaning is constantly changing with time. Our divided, material existence fails to fully represent the all-encompassing and "perfected" force of the *logos*. The *logos* cannot be fully apprehended through language as the poet consistently uses cryptic terminology to evoke its semblance: "el estuario secreto en las montañas" ("II.8" 4). In the same poem, the poet proposes that at best this force can only be experienced in the material world in the violent way that it reveals itself: "Mira en tu derredor: el mundo, ruina. / "Sangre y odio, la historia" ("II.8" 8-9). Interestingly, while the verse associates the *logos* to time ("historia"), it also chooses to make reference to the one element, "blood" (with all of its other connotations such as life, vitality, etc.), and the one emotion, "hate," most closely associated with human violence.⁶

⁶ As I will discuss in more detail in the following chapter, Lacan perceives a sense of aggression, or "aggressivity," that underlies the competitive desire between the self and other that begins early on in the mirror stage of the child's development and continues to be sublimated throughout the child's development ("Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis" Ecrits 8-30).

Just as Los elementos problematized unified notions of subjectivity by showing the process of signification occurring outside of the conscious control of the speaking subject, El reposo contests anthropocentric ideas that present human beings as rational masters of their environment. Throughout El reposo, questions of human agency are raised: “Si en mil años / nada cambió en la tierra, me pregunto: / ¿nos iremos también sin hacer nada?” (“II.8” 10-12). Similarly, ideology is mocked: “Nuestra moral, sus dogmas y certezas, / se ahogaron en un vaso” (“II.9” 1-2). In spite of El reposo’s aversion toward ideological engagement, the book’s poetic speaker does begin to express a heightened sensibility toward social commentary. In the third and final section of El reposo, the speaker criticizes the brutal conquest of Mexico by the Spaniards in the sixteenth century. The chapter ends without any conclusive program that can serve as a resolution of the two opposing, ideological trajectories in Pacheco’s works. Poetry becomes the “reposito del fuego” (“II.2: Don de Heraclito” 6), the spark of both death and life that provides a temporary sense of consolation to human beings caught in a violent and disordered world.

In the second chapter of my study, the inner debate between ideologically engaged poetry and the more morally ambivalent, postmodern sensibility that surfaced in El reposo now takes center stage in No me preguntes cómo pasas el tiempo (1969). The initial poem presents in much more explicit terms the ideological crisis that was just beginning to emerge in his previous works. In spite of his distrust in the master narratives of his political leaders, who are presented as tribal elders, the poet is now compelled to address the social ills of his generation: “Desconfiaste de los señores de la Guerra que imponen la degradación en sus dominios para mantener el esplendor de las metrópolis.../ solo te quedará escoger entre la cámara de gas o el campo de trabajo en

que pastan y rumian los enemigos de tu pueblo” (No me preguntes 13). In this poem, the speaker alludes to his previous description of the poet as a stranded sailor from Los elementos, the lone hero who pursued new forms of poetic communication as a solution for his existential angst. However, in No me preguntes, the poet mocks the previous speaker of Los elementos for his egoistic pursuit of metaphysics. In No me preguntes, the poet has returned from sea and has decided to rejoin his tribe and to engage in the social and political issues of his people.

The poetic subject, whose presence in the first two volumes of poetry had been reduced to that of a mere agent of greater cosmic powers, begins to reveal itself in a more prominent and authoritative fashion. Although the speaker is hesitant to espouse an ideological program as a solution to the social problems of modern humanity, an ideological bias against Western style capitalism is clearly present. In poems like “Ya saben para quién trabajan,” “Che,” “Última fase,” “Un marine,” and “Manuscrito de Tlatelolco,” we find his primary points of target: North American economic and military imperialism, the Spanish conquest and the Mexican government’s massacre of student protestors at Tlatelolco in 1968. However, instead of providing an ideological response, he ends the poem with an open invitation to the reader: “pensemos en todas las cosas que ya se avecinan” (No me preguntes 16). With this invitation, is Pacheco extending an offer to the reader to share in the reading of the book’s remaining poems to find a possible solution for the social and political problems of the world? He never explicitly tells us what he has in mind. However, in the remaining portion of the chapter I will demonstrate that his experimentations with the authoritative voice (i.e. how the author represents himself with respect to ideology and with respect to the reader) throughout No

me preguntes is closely tied to his offer to the reader to consider all of the social and political consequences associated with our earthly existence.

Rather than continuing to develop the strong presence of the authoritative subject apparent in the first two sections of this collection, the poetic subject becomes lost in a series of apparently non-political poems. In fact, the final four sections of the book, which include a variety of poetic types from bestiaries, translations of other authors, poems written by heteronyms and love poems, can be read as Pacheco's answer to the moral predicament presented in the first section: "pensemos en todas las cosas que ya se avecinan." For example, the third section of the No me preguntes presents a series of metapoetic pieces that juxtapose scenes of love and art to scenes of disaster. Poetry, art and love, when framed by the Heraclitian opposites of death and tragedy, form what critic María Rosa Olivera-Williams terms "la muerte como fuerza creadora" (134-44). By juxtaposing an array of actors, organic and inorganic (humans, insects, earthquakes, etc.) in the reciprocal play of life and death, both author and reader, self and other, attain a celebratory union of oneness that is inclusive of the whole world's community.

Pacheco's prolific use of references to other authors, his use of heteronyms and his translations of other poets raises questions regarding Pacheco's position on concepts of influence, which acknowledges the direct influence of precursor authors of the text, and on intertextual collaboration, which, contrarily, shows the creation of a work as occurring between texts and not subjects (Semiotike 37). In a tribute to four great Latin American critics who died in 1984, Angel Rama, Jorge Ibargüengoitia, Manuel Scorza and Marta Traba, Pacheco takes the side of influence by observing the effect that these writers have left on Latin American society: "Si los muertos pudieran escuchar lo que los vivos dicen,

sabrían los cuatro [Rama, Ibargüengoitia, Scorza y Traba] que sus obras y su memoria nos acompañarán mientras estemos sobre esta tierra que es más pobre y es más triste sin ellos” (81). In addition, the prolific number of references to artists and writers within Pacheco’s poems also suggests an indebtedness to precursor authors that betrays clear support for Kristeva’s notion of intertextuality.

Other articles by Pacheco focus on the unconscious and ironic ways that prior works and events contribute to the production of a text in ways which may preclude the conscious influence of precursor writers. For example, in “El retorno de la poesía popular,” the poet observes how the words of many poets have filtered their way unconsciously into the language of people and pop culture (30-32). In “1899: Rubén Darío vuelve a España,” Pacheco observes how a number of interrelated events, many of which occurred by chance, aid in textual production. For example, Pacheco points out how Chile’s new source of wealth from guano sales funded Darío’s trip to Chile where he would read French authors in the library of the Palacio de la Moneda (61). Even though these articles show the ironic and unconscious ways that texts are often formed, Pacheco’s willingness to name certain precursor authors does suggest some type of influence which betrays a clear embracement of intertextual collaboration. This contradiction is never fully resolved in his poetry.

The third chapter of my dissertation is an analysis of Pacheco’s book, Desde entonces (1980). In his sixth collection of poetry, the poet continues many of the same intertextual and bestiary strategies of No me preguntes. However, we also encounter a poetic speaker who will more willingly shares his personal experience, a strategy which had begun to appear in Irás y no volverás (1972). Many of these poems deal with the innocence of his

youth. However, in spite of the Pacheco's relatively young age at the time of the book's publication as well as the collection's thematic emphasis on his childhood, there is a resigned tone that belies some of the muted optimism of No me preguntes. For example, poems with themes like love and art that united poet and reader in No me preguntes are conspicuously absent.

Time emerges once again as the aggressive force, but in Desde entonces, I interpret time as not only dividing self from other but also separating self from self. In "Lavandería," the poet comments: "Y vamos con un fardo de otros-yo / que nos pesa, nos hunde" (9-10). Subjectivity and epistemology continue to be problematized in ways that express underlying social and political consequences. For example, in "Cocuyos," he recalls the wonder of his childhood experience with fireflies, but instead of recalling the magical joy of this event, he highlights the discursive construction of our thought systems by connecting the fly to a number of metaphoric associations: son "luciérnagas" (2), "estrellas verdes" (7), "faros errantes" (8). Yet the childhood experience is anything but innocent. The poet observes the sight of a beetle on the verge of death: "me presentan / ya casi muerto un triste escarabajo" (11-12), "estrella herida en la prisión de una mano" (16). Other poems present in everyday terms how seemingly ordinary and banal thoughts and emotions can have potentially significant manifestations on a global scale. In "Extranjeros" the poet emphasizes how we innocently but maliciously form teams to exclude others for the most superficial and banal reasons.

Images recalling the predominant role of language acting in the subject's unconscious once again bring to mind Lacan. In Desde entonces' long poem, "Jardín de niños," the subjective awareness of the poem's child protagonist is produced through the interaction

with his or her mirror image: “Narciso en el estanque: hay un espejo / donde se abisma el que se reconoce” (9: 1-2). The child’s narcissistic interest echoes Lacan’s notion that the obsession with his image is what constitutes the child’s own sense of self, his own separate existence from the other. In “The Mirror Stage,” Lacan states that the child’s desire is the desire for the object of the other’s desire (Ecrits 19). This acknowledgement of the other is ultimately what reinforces the self’s sense of isolation. Lacan states that this attraction for the desire of the other is repetitive and the image of the other “alienates himself from himself” (19).

The discursive nature in which the child sees the world is again emphasized, yet the referential capacity of language is incomplete: “el niño reinventa las palabras / y todo adquiere un nombre. Verbos actuantes, / muchedumbre de sustantivos. Poder / de doble filo: sirve lo mismo / a la revelación y al encubrimiento” (13: 1-5). The stanza reveals a pivotal cornerstone in Pacheco’s ideology. Words reveal, but they also mask or cover meaning. A full correspondence between signifier and signified remains incomplete. Furthermore, the poem foregrounds the division between self and other and signifier and signified in a way that implicitly connects this division to their subsequent manifestation within a social and political context. For example, shortly after connecting the subject’s emergence into speech through its interaction with the outside world, the poet connects our divided existence to the existence of death camps: “No obstante, prosigue la matanza. / Se extiende el hambre. / En el sur de América / hay campos de tortura, inmensas fosas / se abren en nuestra tierra como en Auschwitz” (18: 3-8). Although the poet does not specifically name the specific location of these torture cells, the reader is led to believe he is alluding to the massive abuse occurring under a number of U.S. aligned South

American dictatorships in the seventies. Ultimately, the ideological commentary of Desde entonces lies in its representations of the self as inescapably divided from the other and its emphasis on the potentially violent consequences that result from the innocent ways in which people see and understand both themselves and the outside world.

The fourth chapter of my work analyzes Pacheco's tenth volume of poetry, El silencio de la luna (1994). The title, taken from The Aeneid, relates the silent forces which we can never know that make life at once foreboding, but also interesting. The tone, which appeared hauntingly desperate in Desde entonces, is now more willing to embrace the indefiniteness of life as a source of wonder and instruction. There is an increased acknowledgement of the technological influence of the postmodern age as well as the way in which our thought systems are not only constituted by the linguistic signifier but by virtual signifiers (i.e. computerized and televised images and symbols, etc.) as well.

Within a Lacanian context that combines desire/subjectivity/ideology, Pacheco often chooses to make his social commentary by demonstrating how the self advances itself to the detriment of the other. Like Desde entonces, El silencio generally presents his social critique in universal terms and avoids specific references to definite topical events of the time. For example, "Prehistoria" suggests that underneath the construction of our human identity is the desire to control and transform other people. No explicit reference is made to specific political or ethnic groups that he may have in mind. Similarly, "Ley de extranjería" shows the way we use language to form allies as a desire to defend against and impose ourselves on neighboring countries. Both "El Gran Inquisidor" and "El Padre de los Pueblos" recast the human quest for authority as desire to master even those within our own community.

Despite the frequent presence of poems in El silencio that link the collusion of language systems and institutional authority in historical occurrences of abuse and violence, Pacheco returns to art and myth as great teachers of human values. In “Homenaje a la Compañía Teatral Española de Enrique Rambal, Padre e Hijo,” Pacheco again recounts the wonder of a childhood experience somewhat reminiscent of the previously mentioned “Cocuyos” of Desde entonces. However, unlike the poem in Desde entonces, where the poet implicitly associates the child’s curiosity about a firefly to the capture and demise of a beetle, this poem exalts the childhood event of going to the theatre as a positive, life forming experience. Other poems deconstruct rigid notions of history like “Ocaso de sirenas,” while poems like “Amado Nervo agradece a Rafael Alberti al recordarlo” exalt the didactic function of myth and art. Although the continued use of bestiaries and intertextual strategies extend a previously established ideological program by countering expressions of human grandeur and dominance, the speaker of El silencio has now rationally and emotionally come to terms with the inescapable separation of the self from the outside world. Knowing that the individual is inescapably bound by and subject to the restrictions of language, the speaker returns to art and myth as the essential vehicles that give life meaning.

The concluding chapter of my dissertation summarizes how Lacanian notions of subjectivity and ideology help reveal the evolving ways in which Pacheco confronts the social and political problems of his time. They are the following: 1) notions of human subjectivity evolve from the hermetic, impersonal style of Los elementos and El reposo, where the political consequences of our subjective consciousness are shown to arise to the detriment of other entities; 2) a more socially involved poet appears in No me

preguntas; he employs a variety of literary strategies that reposition human subjectivity within an interdependent relationship within the world; 3) there is dire resignation in Desde entonces, where the poetic speaker tries to use the common tie of our existential angst to help build a better future; finally 4) Pacheco is a more playful lyricist in El silencio; he employs myth and art as vehicles to destabilize linear and monolithic ways of thinking in an increasingly technological world. Although reticent to espouse a specific ideological response, it is clear that Pacheco's political program seeks to revolutionize society by revolutionizing language along two opposing paths. He foregrounds the power relations inherent in language while recognizing the need to speak out against what he believes are the social wrongs of human existence. By pointing out his own complicity in ideological engagement, Pacheco ultimately advances an ideological position that repositions the human subject in a less adversarial and more intimate relationship with all the other members of our earthly existence. We will see the foundation of such an ideology in his first two books, Los elementos and El reposo, which we will analyze in chapter I.

CHAPTER II

ESTABLISHING AN ELEMENTARY IDEOLOGY:

SUBJECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE OTHER

Examining the ideological commentary in Pacheco's first two volumes of poetry, Los elementos de la noche (1963) and El reposo del fuego (1966), requires one to penetrate the many levels of symbolic connections between nature and language and between and cosmic evolution. In the previous chapter, I defined Pacheco's ideology as one which acknowledges constructing political as well as ethical ideas (i.e. moral notions of good and bad) that human beings use in relating to the other members of our world community (e.g. other humans, animals, plants, etc.). His position becomes intimately tied to the ways people use language epistemologically to construct a seemingly unified understanding of themselves and the world around them. For Pacheco, subjectivity and epistemology collude in hiding an innate desire of human beings for control and mastery over other competing entities of the outside environment. Thus, both Los elementos and El reposo reveal Pacheco's basic moral position, or an elementary ethical commentary, that foregrounds how human desire, concealed in the apparently neutral form of language, inevitably places the subject in an adversarial relationship with the other inhabitants of the world. Although generally overlooked by scholars, this position operates through all of Pacheco's subsequent poetry.

In our examination of Los elementos, we will see how many of the book's poems may be interpreted on a cosmic level in which the human individual is trapped in a world where the physical elements of the universe collide and disperse around him. We will also see that many poems lend themselves to a psychoanalytical interpretation. For example, "Árbol entre dos muros" and "Canción para escribirse en una ola" reveal a Lacanian-like connection between the alienated state of the human being and the individual's entry into language. The production of the linguistic text is represented as an autonomous act, a rather violent confrontation between signifiers occurring in the mind's unconscious. Operating in Heraclitian cycles of attraction and repulsion, the play of signification resembles the interaction of the cosmic elements of the universe, becoming what Hoeksema has referred to as the "imaginative elements of the night" (4).

By showing how signification operates outside of the conscious control of the speaking and writing subject, as well as of the reader once a text is published, we can discern an early manifestation of postmodern poetry in Latin American literature.⁷ Pacheco, whom Mario Valdés has called "the most remarkable postmodern poet writing today in any language" (463), reveals affinities with postmodern literature, not only in decentering notions of Man or Truth, but in his skepticism toward a close correspondence between signifier and signified. In spite of these similarities, the implicit presence of an underlying structure in the poems of Los elementos could, in the minds of some critics, betray Valdés' characterization of Pacheco as the preeminent postmodern poet. Even so,

⁷ By postmodern, I am referring to the notions of divided subjectivity, the emphasis on the relativity of moral systems and a growing emphasis on language as a politically charged system. I have in mind Linda Hutcheon's comment: "To the postmodernist mind, everything is empty at the center. ... \ Actually, that center is not so much empty as called into question, interrogated as to its power and its politics. And if the notion of center- be it seen as 'Man' or Truth or whatever- is challenged in postmodernism, what happens to the idea of 'centered' subjectivity, the subject of representation?" (38).

examining the argument of a logocentric bias in Los elementos reveals that Pacheco's use of the *logos* is not logocentric. In fact, although there are similarities that we will uncover among Lacan, Heraclitus and Pacheco, we shall see that both contemporaries, Lacan and Pacheco, differ significantly from the Greek philosopher in Heraclitus' confidence in language's ability to communicate objectifiable truths.

Pacheco's second book of poetry, El reposo, reveals more explicitly the political implications of his Heraclitian and Lacanian world. Conventional notions of evil with respect to violence, death, warfare, etc. become relativized; these become necessary for the perpetuation of the greater cosmos. In other words, the human understanding of death and sickness as a moral "evil" is called into question since a position of moral relativism like that of Pacheco also acknowledges that death and sickness are necessary for population control and to allow the universe to maintain a necessary equilibrium. Consequently, in the morally relative world of El reposo, people use words as tools to control and exploit the surrounding environment. As one poem plainly states, history is not necessarily a record of human progress and accomplishment, but a testimony to the destruction and confrontation wreaked by human beings: "Sangre y odio, la historia" (Tarde o temprano "II.8" 9). In my view, implicit in this synthesis of Lacan and Heraclitus is the following statement of certain fundamental ideological principles:

- 1) The outside world cannot be objectively understood by the individual and may only be known subjectively.
- 2) Each individual's desire propels the subject into a confrontational relationship with the other elements of the universe (other humans, animals, plants, etc.).
- 3) Language is highly complicitous in establishing a deceptively ordered sense of knowing both the self and the outside world.
- 4) By ignoring the subjective nature of human thought systems, the amount of violence in the world is exacerbated when humans impose one system of discourse under the name of "morally good" on other competing discursive systems.

This chapter examines the way in which Pacheco combines concepts reminiscent of Heraclitus and Lacan to express these ideological principles. Although scholars like Hoeksema have been quick to point out the strong Heraclitian presence in Los elementos and in El reposo, they have generally overlooked the Lacanian motifs in these early poems.⁸ Michael Doudoroff comes closest to suggesting a psychoanalytic reading by placing Los elementos and El reposo within a “tradición simbólico-surrealista” (147). In my opinion, by investigating these surrealist manifestations from a Lacanian point of view, we can elucidate an emerging ideology that foregrounds language’s role in mediating the antagonistic relationship between the human, knowing subject and outside world, or between the self and the other.

Analyzing the surrealist roots in Pacheco’s poetry of the sixties presents several problems, not the least of which is the use of the term “surrealism” itself. While the surrealist movement in France borrowed and modified some concepts from psychoanalytic theory, the esthetic movement, as defined by its leader, André Breton, in his initial publication, Manifesto of Surrealism (1924), was never an exact correlative of psychoanalytic theory.⁹ None of the surrealist leaders, including Breton, were trained

⁸ Ron Friis has addressed Derridian notions of deconstruction with respect to El reposo del fuego, but Friis acknowledges that “critics have neglected to mention how the conception of deconstruction of *logos* in the poems [of El reposo] reflects the fundamental life of the sign” (63).

⁹ In the first stage of the movement, Breton defined surrealism as “psychic automatism in a pure state, by which one proposes to express verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner- the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern” (26). Roudinesco observes “the Surrealists challenged the principle of novelistic performance in order to invent new modalities of creative expression. The psychoanalysts, for their part, retreated to positions that were academic” (6). In his Second Manifesto of Surrealism (1929), Breton moderated his original emphasis on automatic writing. In its place, surrealism was defined more as a state of mind acting against conventional forms of Western thought and logic (128). By 1934, Breton stated that what remained as surrealism’s sole act of faith was the “omnipotence of desire” (137), which helped “bring about the state where the distinction between the subjective and the objective loses its

psychoanalysts (Roudinesco 4), and, in spite of some contacts between Breton and Freud, there was almost no cross publication in the respective groups' journals (9).

Furthermore, even though the entry of surrealist poetry into Mexico with Octavio Paz in the fifties created a national outcry among Mexico's foremost critics, including *Estaciones'* editor, Elías Nandino, Paz's surrealist poetry was far removed from the rather rigid precepts set by Breton decades before. Dating back to the fifties, Pacheco has addressed the surrealist presence in his predecessor's work in a number of his essays. In "La batalla del surrealismo" (1977), he observes that the mature handling of the surrealist debate in Mexico between Paz and Nandino allowed surrealism to be syncretized, "como un elemento natural e imprescindible en la visión de las cosas y en la retórica del oficio" (53), even affecting and influencing Mexican literature of the subsequent decade. Since Pacheco's observation seems to connect Paz's surrealism to Pacheco's own poetry of the sixties, I will approach Pacheco's ideological program within the context of the surrealist base inherited from Paz approximately ten years before.

Jason Wilson reports that, prior to Paz, the Mexican group of poets known as the *Contemporáneos* took an interest in many of the goals of the early French surrealist movement, but Breton's idea of automatic writing was almost always the stumbling block (13) that prevented the movement from obtaining a substantive foothold in Mexico. Trips to Mexico by French surrealist, Antonin Artaud, in 1936, and by Breton, in 1938, as well as the Fourth International Surrealist Exhibition hosted in Mexico City in 1940, would place Mexico in a very visible surrealist spotlight at the turn of this decade. During his stay, Breton would find in Frida Kahlo a natural surrealist (Schneider 160), a

necessity and its value" ("What is Surrealism?" 138). In spite of the Breton's evolving position on surrealism, criticism in Mexico was primarily directed at Breton's early definition in 1924.

label which the Mexican painter would later vehemently reject (Herrera 262-63).

Although key members of the Mexican poetic establishment attended the Exhibition in 1940, none of these members contributed to it. Particularly during his association in the forties with Peruvian painter and poet, César Mora, Xavier Villaurrutia, a Mexican poet, is considered the member of the *Contemporáneos* group that most experimented with surrealism. However, Paz is critical of Villaurrutia for the reflective (i.e. consciously censured) qualities of his poems that were purportedly inconsistent with surrealist' dictates for automatic writing, which were supposedly composed and published without any modification or conscious censorship. Villaurrutia, surrealism's greatest advocate of the thirties and forties, ultimately found it out of synch with the Mexican's desire to be lucid, "aún a la hora de soñar" (Wilson 12).

Wilson also regards Paz as the introductory link that sparked surrealist expressions within Mexican borders, which occurred upon the poet's return from Paris in 1952 (10, 18). However, Paz, Mexico's master poet, like the *Contemporáneos* before him, remained deeply suspicious of automatic writing. Paz comments: "A todos nos interesaba la poesía como experiencia, pero no nos interesaba el lenguaje del surrealismo, ni sus teorías sobre la 'escritura automática,' nos seducía su afirmación intransigente de ciertos valores" (Las peras del olmo 56). The value that Paz would most emphasize was its curative ability to restore a sick society: "su tentativa por encarnar en los tiempos y hacer de la poesía el alimento propio de la sociedad; su afirmación del deseo y del amor; su continuo proyectarse de la imaginación" ("Una entrevista con Octavio Paz" 64).

Accordingly, as Paz distanced himself from the formal techniques espoused by the French surrealists of the twenties, several decades later Paz found in Breton's surrealism

a kindred attitude that trumpeted love as an alternative to Western society (Wilson 18). Paz repeatedly points out the exacerbating effect that rational discourses like science and mathematics have on the human psyche, discourses which he associated with Western society (Monsiváis 8). In addition, he opposes the conventions and moral values shaped by capitalist society which contributed to the alienated condition of human beings (Wilson 67). Instead, Paz believed that people should return to a “natural” state that admits some sort of communication with the infinite and the unknowable. He sees in surrealism, which he defined as love, poetry and liberty, some type of communication that permitted correspondence with the outside world (peras 168). Moreover, communication with the “outside” often took the form of the poet’s attraction for a woman, who was frequently presented in erotic and surrealist terms from a patriarchal perspective: “His [Paz’s] erotic love was not that of the libertine; for the core of his view was his recognition of woman as the ‘other.’ She is the mediatrix, opening communication between man and himself and nature” (Wilson 35).

Although Paz has been censured by some critics for his patriarchal representation of women, he consistently defended his portrayal of women in his poetry. In fact, Paz went to great lengths to distinguish himself from the French surrealist movement by disavowing the group’s advocacy of Sade as a symbolic leader. He criticized the legacy of Sade for promoting an expression of love that subjugated the “beloved” to the will of the ego. For him, the poetic speaker and the beloved were united through mutual consent. In place of Sade, Paz substituted Rousseau, whose vision of love and utopia was more consistent with his attempt to reconcile the subject/object divide (Wilson 43). Therefore, in spite of Paz’s rejection of rational discourses associated with science, mathematics and

capitalism, he continued to borrow heavily from Western, male, and arguably patriarchal thinkers like Rousseau, in his own subjective construction of the ideal relationship between men and women.

Wilson also points out that Breton's earlier emphasis on automatic writing, dream *récits*, collective games and the use of psychoanalytic vocabulary, which more closely linked surrealism to the psychoanalytic movement, was absent in the Frenchman's poetry of the forties (23-24). Although Paz saw value in these activities as psychological exercises that could be useful in poetic production, he distinguished them from their poetic worth in and of themselves. In fact, Paz repeatedly avoided a formalistic encapsulation of his surrealist poetry, emphasizing surrealism as an "attitude" or way of life. In an interview with Roberto Vernengo in 1954, Paz gave the following definition of surrealism: "Creo que constituye una cierta actitud vital que, apresuradamente, puede definirse como la última, más completa y violenta tentativa del espíritu poético por encarnar la historia" (62). In 1962, Paz confided to Claude Couffon: "Para mí su influencia [la influencia del surrealismo] ha sido decisiva; pero más como mentalidad, como actitud" (80). In Cuadrivio (1965), Paz distinguished the surrealism of poet Luis Cernuda from the surrealism which limited itself to a specific technique or style: "Para Cernuda el surrealismo fue algo más que una lección de estilo, más que una poética o una escuela de asociaciones e imágenes verbales: fue una tentativa de encarnación de la poesía en la vida, una subversión que abarcaba tanto al lenguaje como a las instituciones. Una moral y una pasión" (175). In his introduction to Poesía en movimiento (1966), Paz observed that many of the central concerns of his *Taller* group (1938-41) addressed

themes of love and rebellion (20), the same themes that would be part of his later association with the French surrealists.

The question is to what extent did Paz's surrealist poetry affect Pacheco's poetry of the sixties? In 1966, Pacheco stated that his admiration for Paz has no end and continues with each new book (*Narradores* 246). Pacheco affirms the unifying effects in Paz's surrealism by underscoring Paz's observation that in surrealism, imagination, love and liberty are the "únicas fuerzas de consagrar al mundo y volverlo de veras 'otro'" ("La batalla del surrealismo" 50). Therefore, by specifically mentioning Paz in his essay on surrealism, Pacheco implicitly connects Paz's works to his own. As we will see, the surrealist characteristics in Pacheco's early poems share Paz's concern in attempting to close the division between the subject and the object, or the self and the other. However, Pacheco's poems distinguish themselves from Paz's by revealing a Lacanian-like interplay between subjective consciousness and Lacan's Other that will form the basis of an elementary ideology in his first two foundational volumes of poetry, as well his later volumes of poetry.¹⁰

¹⁰ Dylan Evans points out that Lacan distinguished between two types of the other. For Lacan, the Other, similar to his concept of the "Thing," represents the mythic sense of otherness, of radical alterity, which cannot be fully assimilated in symbolic language (Evans 132). The Other is initially associated with the mother image, but also represents the unique chain of signifiers, that mediates the relationship with the subject. The Other has connotations of wholeness, but also emptiness. That is, the Other represents wholeness experienced by the newborn child which cannot be assimilated by language. Evans points out that mythical, complete Other does not exist (133). In other words, to conceive the concepts of fullness and emptiness requires linguistic signification. By locating the place of signification in the inaccessible realm of the Other, Lacan emphasizes that language occurs in a space outside the individual's conscious control. Moreover, Lacan distinguishes the Other from the specular image, which he denotes as the "other" ("o" in lower case), that the infant sees in the mirror stage, which the child constructs "as a rival with himself" (*Ecrits* 22) and serves as a reflection and projection of the ego. Entry into the symbolic and recognition of the Other does not necessarily mitigate the aggressivity experienced in the mirror stage. However, Lacan says that symbolic existence may provide for some sense of "libidinal normalization" (*Ecrits* 2) by allowing the individual to substitute the phallus to stand in for the lost signifier that represents the Other. My definition of the "other" is related to the Lacan's use of the word, "other," in that both emphasize the projection of the subject's ego on any particularized or collective image in the outside world that serves to reaffirm the subject's own existence as a separate entity. Except when specifically referring to Lacan's notion of the inaccessible realm of the Other, I will use the term in the lower case.

Consequently, in my reading of Pacheco, I am primarily concerned with Lacan's understanding of subjective consciousness, its relationship to the Other, and the role that desire plays in projecting itself on the individual. Prior to my discussion of Pacheco's works, it will be helpful to provide a short summary of these basic concepts of Lacan, as well as other related theoretical concepts, which help reflect the ideology in Pacheco's poetry. The dialectic of self versus the other requires that we focus our attention both on subjectivity and epistemology; with respect to the former, it refers to the way in which the poetic speaker sees himself, and the latter, to the way the speaker knows, understands and responds to the rest of the world. Lacan proposed a direct correspondence between the acquisition of language and the interaction of our subjective consciousness with the outside environment. He generally points out that as young children, humans exist in a subjective state of wholeness, not distinguishing between their own body and that of their mother. Nonetheless, between the ages of six to 18 months, children pass through a mirror stage, where they begin to distinguish their mothers' image from their own, thus leading to a dichotomy of self/other. Although this stage begins with the children's fascination with their own image, they soon develop a sense of aggression, or "aggressivity," between their own uncoordinated body and the perceived coordination of the outside world (e.g. the mother's mastery of her own body) (Ecrits 8).

As children pursue reunification with what they believe was a previous state of idyllic wholeness, they seek recognition, which they obtain through the reciprocating gestures (caresses, etc.) of their mother. Inevitably, the children's attempts at unification with their mother are denied when an authority figure intervenes, which Lacan associated metaphorically with the Name-of-the-Father, and which he develops from Freud's

Oedipal complex, from a linguistic and symbolic perspective. By accepting the limiting structures of the paternal symbol, which Lacan refers to as the “phallus,” children accept living under the Law, which is the inherited codes of the predominant language and behavior of one’s culture. Their acceptance of linguistic communication, therefore, serves both as a symbolic rejection of any imaginary pretensions toward “oneness” and a tacit acceptance to live “divided” according to the restrictive order of society.

Consequently, instigated by their correspondence with the outside world, children enter into the symbolic stage of language when they yield to the structure of the authorial father in the form of language.¹¹ The phallus (or transcendental signifier), intended as a symbolic equivalent to the concept of an intervening authority rather than as an explicit reference to the biological organ, is what stops the infinite play of polysemic images and delivers the child into the apprehension of meaning through language. Thus, the phallus becomes the initial object which is the substitute for the lack, the lost feeling of wholeness, which Lacan terms the “Thing” and which he has identified in a patriarchal manner with the mother, “the existence of the emptiness at the center of the real” (The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 121).

As language is the medium through which the human individual understands both self and ‘reality,’ the individual’s unconscious desire is what underlies language and ultimately compromises language’s ability to reflect the outside world accurately. In each subject’s desire for recognition from the other, there is inevitably a clash in the way each views external reality. Lacan regards modern science as complicitous in this struggle since knowledge gained through scientific discovery deludes the human being

¹¹ It is this passage from “‘pretence’ to the order of the signifier” that grounds the locus of speech in the Other (Ecrits 305).

into “forgetting his subjectivity” (Ecrits 70).¹² For Lacan, subjectivity is not a physically objectifiable entity. Instead, human subjectivity is fundamentally divided since it is a function of the signifying activity of the unconscious based on a lack (i.e. the subject’s initial recognition of separation). For Lacan, this lack takes the form of a symbolically inscribed history that resides as a chain of signifiers in the unconscious. The signifiers operate in a diachronic fashion through metonymy, somewhat like the words of a sentence, and in a synchronic, or metaphoric fashion, where one signifier may substitute for another signifier (Evans 188). Therefore, Lacan attempts a mapping of the signifying chain that can reveal to the individual through psychoanalysis not only one’s “divided” existence, but also one’s symbolic history.

Beginning with the second chapter, I will be working with the ideas of Julia Kristeva, who in various works, such as La révolution du langage poétique, has expressed an indebtedness to Lacan. Kristeva began publishing in prestigious French journals in 1967 (Nakeeb 1: 635) and is credited with originating the term and theory of “intertextuality.” In addition to Lacan, Kristeva acknowledges the work of Russian formalist, Mikhail Bakhtin, as having a major impact on the development of her understanding of intertextuality. In “Word, Dialogue and Novel,” initially published in 1969 as part of Séméiotiké, Kristeva draws on the works of Bakhtin, whose notion of “dialogized heteroglossia” (263) observed that a text consisted not of one voice, but a number of distinct voices and styles that represent a multitude of competing opinions and world views. The text is “dialogized” in as much as these views, opinions or words are not

¹² That is, scientific discourse assumes that both the self and the outside world exist as ontological truths and can be known through “objective” methods such as science. Lacan opposes this notion by showing conscious individuals as living in separation from the signifying activity of their unconscious, which exists in a realm the conscious self can never fully access.

formulated solely by the speaking author, since the word one speaks is already “half someone else’s” (293). Borrowing from Bakhtin, Kristeva shows that the meaning of any given word or text is not only determined by the writer (subject) and the reader (addressee), but it is also determined by an anterior text, a “synchronic literary corpus ... a mosaic of quotations” (37). In fact, Kristeva argues that textual production does not necessarily occur between subjects (i.e. writers) but between texts: “[A]ny text is the absorption and transformation of another [text]” (37). Jonathan Culler affirms Kristeva’s importance with respect to her recognition of the impact that intertextuality has on our subjective identities: “Subjectivity is not so much a personal core as an intersubjectivity, the track or the furrow left by the experience of texts of all kinds” (140).

In La révolution du langage poétique (1974), she acknowledges the contribution of Lacan’s ideas on metaphor and metonymy (59) in her own conceptualization of intertextuality. In fact, in this book, she also extends her notion of intertextuality to demonstrate that signification is not only a result of commingled precursor texts (i.e. language), but a “transposition” from any precursor sign system to another. This transposition could be from visual to verbal (the transcription of a carnival event from visual experience to written text) or from a verbal text to another written text (the transcription of “narrative to text” (59)). Thus Kristeva argues that any transfer between sign systems produces an alteration of the old text with new signifying possibilities- “a new articulation of the thetic - of enunciative and denotative potentiality” (60).¹³

¹³ Kristeva would define “thetic” as “all enunciation, whether of a word or of a sentence” (43) that requires the enunciating subject to distinguish her separate existence from the object that she is positing. The thetic also acts as the “threshold between two heterogenous realms: the semiotic and the symbolic” (48). Kristeva would identify the semiotic with the drives of the subject that intervene in the symbolic (i.e. the logical rules and grammar that produce signification, or denotation). Therefore, Kristeva saw the transposition from one code system to another as largely influenced by this semiotic drive of the self.

Kristeva's ideas on intertextuality will be particularly helpful when I examine Pacheco's prolific use of intertextual literary techniques in No me preguntes as well as in his subsequent volumes of poetry.

One of the immediately distinguishing features in Pacheco's surrealist poetry is the way that his first book of poems, Los elementos (1963), reflects Lacanian ideas regarding subjective consciousness, language and the other. A number of critics like de Villena and Hoeksema have observed how Los elementos allows for metapoetic, cosmic, and social readings in their attempt to relate our current world to the "elemental, basic condition of human existence" (Hoeksema 3). However, critics have on the whole overlooked a psychoanalytical reading, which is equally apparent in the text. Such an interpretation presents itself in the Los elementos' first poem, "Árbol entre dos muros." The tree, symbolic of the phallus, poetic lucidity, human consciousness, or daylight ("Árbol" 2) is perched between two "walls" of night (1) suggesting a vaginal form. The interaction of the day with night allows both the subject and the text to be born into conscious existence; that is, the human subject's existence as a conscious being is inextricably tied to his ability to communicate through language. The poem's references to "nombre" and "letras" make it clear that the poet wishes to connect human consciousness to language: "Ante el día calcinado, dejo caer tu nombre: / haz de letras hurañas" (9-10). Although the reference to "tu nombre" (9) implies the presence of another entity, this "tú" remains elusive throughout the poem. However, the "tú," which is related to "nombre," could be understood as the subject's linguistic recognition of any distinct, outside entity, which is not unlike Lacan's understanding of the Other.

“Árbol” challenges traditional notions regarding authorial control that present the speaker (writer, or poet, etc.) as consciously directing his discourse. Throughout the poem, the interplay of personal pronouns emphasizes the creation of the subject, not as a rational, unified entity commanding his destiny, but as a verbal construction produced through a signifying action beyond his conscious control. For example, the poet uses references to “luz” and “isla” to denote the act of poetic and linguistic communication. By employing the impersonal pronoun, “se,” with grammatical subjects like “luz” and “isla,” the poetic moment seems to be produced autonomously. The conscious, aware author is not even mentioned: “[E]l día se devora” (5), while an “isla en llamas ... brota y se destruye” (11).

Pacheco’s poem mirrors Lacan in that both thinkers understand textual production as the interaction of signifiers occurring outside of the conscious control of the human subject. Like Lacan, Pacheco’s poem also gives prominence to the unconscious act of signification in the unconscious. In fact, his complex use of symbols, such as the use of words like “luz” and “isla” to signify the poetic moment, occurs throughout Los elementos, and in many ways Pacheco’s metapoetic poems remind us of Lacan’s concepts of metaphor.

To my knowledge, although Pacheco has never published an essay on Lacan, his interest in the unconscious processes of signification is supported by several critical essays that he has published on surrealism, addressing in particular how the movement’s goals were expressed in the works of Mexican poet, Octavio Paz. In an essay on the repercussions of Paz’s surrealism on Mexican poetry, Pacheco comments: “No hay desde entonces ningún poeta [mexicano] que ... siga [el surrealismo] de manera dogmática. No

hay tampoco ninguno que no se beneficie de lo que el surrealismo conquistó a lo indecible” (“La batalla” 53). By claiming that all Mexican writers have benefited from Paz’s surrealism, Pacheco underscores his own interest in addressing the point where the “indecipherable” becomes “sayable” in the form of poetry.

We can see this interest expressed throughout Los elementos in poems like “Árbol.” However, while these poems emphasize the act of signification as an autonomous act occurring in the mind’s unconscious, it is also clear that Pacheco attributes some aspects of textual production to the conscious efforts of the author. For example, throughout his first two books, which Doudoroff claims are his most surrealistic (147, 167), Pacheco employs a number of literary techniques that indicate the conscious intervention of the poet. Along the same lines, in Autor/Lector, Alicia Rivero [-Potter] observes a structuring role that the author plays in the process of textual production:

Sostengo que si ha sido saludable para la crítica contemporánea librarse del antiguo au(c)tor, no por ello deja de existir el papel estructurante que todo escritor posee inicialmente al inventar y organizar los elementos formales, la armazón del texto. Elige vocablos, el tipo de narración; decide el grado de apertura que tendrá la obra. (29)

Therefore, the poet of Los elementos does give some structure to the text: he adds or subtracts words to the initial, unconsciously formed material, and he employs poetic devices in ways that are indicative of Rivero [-Potter]’s comments. Even so, the poems of Los elementos repeatedly emphasize that the specific point of communication occurs in the unconscious, perhaps as a general rhythmic combination of words in rudimentary phrases, or as a series of loosely connected words or signifiers. This relationship between intertextual collaboration of past texts and the active participation of the author in textual

production will be a theoretical concept that is repeatedly addressed, but never completely resolved in Pacheco's poetry.

In the second stanza of "Árbol," Pacheco continues to use erotic imagery to represent the originating point of linguistic signification as a type of birth, in which the text is delivered from one inaccessible realm of being to another, which is associated with our conscious, symbolic existence as language-bearing beings from a Lacanian perspective: "Cuando llega [el día, que simboliza el lenguaje o el momento poético] ante la puerta roja / arde su luz, su don, su llama" (6-7). The door, another symbol for the vaginal opening (De Vries 175), serves as a passageway through which the human subject, and the poem, for that matter, must pass to be born into a world of speech. By describing the door as red, the door may be associated with a number of other connotations such as blood and pain associated with childbirth (De Vries 466).

Because of the erotic imagery in the poem's first four lines, the reference to the color, red, may also recall the religious notion of sin (De Vries 466). When read in the context of subsequent poems of Los elementos like "Tarde enemiga," which contain religious imagery, the reference to "puerta roja" is more clearly connected to the Biblical idea of original sin. More specifically, I am referring to the passage in Genesis that recounts how Adam and Eve, after eating the apple forbidden to them by God, become conscious of their nakedness vis-à-vis the other. From this perspective I see Pacheco using the "puerta roja" as a symbol for original sin in as much as all people make a choice to engage in language, thus delivering themselves into an awareness of their separate existence from the other entities of the universe. Therefore, by making a choice to enter into symbolic existence via language, people develop an awareness of their own sinful

nature, or their own “nakedness,” that is inextricably connected to their sense of separation from each other.

In the fourth stanza, “Árbol” continues to reflect Lacanian ideas of subjectivity by showing subjective consciousness as the functional byproduct of one’s interaction with the outside environment. On the one hand, using the collective first person pronoun, “nos” in an object position, the speaker accentuates that both the poet and human subject function as a mental impression produced in its interaction with an external other: “todo nos interroga y recrimina” (14). On the other hand, this “todo” is not necessarily an affirmation of the subject’s ability to objectively understand and interact with the outside world. Instead, this “todo” reflects Lacan’s idea of the illusory other as the poem’s following lines observe: “nada responde, / nada persiste contra el fluir del día” (15-16). We should recall how Lacan’s notion of the other can represent both wholeness and nothingness. More specifically, citing Heidegger, Lacan emphasizes how the German thinker uses a vase to represent both concepts of fullness and emptiness. Lacan suggests that notions of emptiness and fullness are not necessarily real ontological entities, but verbal constructions created by a human subject in his interactions with the outside world: “Emptiness and fullness are introduced into a world that by itself knows not of them. It is on the basis of this fabricated signifier, this vase, that emptiness and fullness as such enter the world” (Ethics 120). Like Lacan, the text of Pacheco, with its alternate use of the words “todo” and “nada,” indicates similar notions of emptiness and wholeness in the realm of the unconscious, which the divided subject attempts to know, but from which he or she remains detached, unable to access it directly.

The fifth stanza also links our subjective consciousness more closely to a Lacanian understanding of subjectivity by relating our symbolic experience to an underlying force that drives the signifying chain:

Agua y musgo devoran las señales,
navegación inmóvil de la savia,
muros de nuestras sombras enlazadas
hoguera que se abisma en sus rescoldos. (18-21)

The word “savia” (18), or sap, which, in Spanish has a connotation expressing the idea of life-force and vitality, also recalls Lacan by showing the drive compulsion, which results from the initial feeling of loss experienced by the subject.¹⁴ For Lacan, this experience of loss manifests itself by persistently returning to the subject in the form of a signifier.¹⁵ In the fourteenth line of Pacheco’s poem, there is also a feeling of loss associated with existence as a language-bearing entity, implying that language enables people to grasp our lonely, isolated experience in ways that other life forms like animals cannot mimic. The line, “[t]odo nos interroga y recrimina. / Pero nada responde” (14-15) indicates that the poet’s attempt to communicate with the outside world is met with failure. However, as the poem’s speaker leaves the conscious world associated with language and enters the

¹⁴ Evans observes that the real purpose of the drive is not some mythical goal of full satisfaction, but to return to its circular path, and the real source of enjoyment is the repetitive movement of this closed circuit (46-47).

¹⁵ In his “Seminar on the Purloined Letter”, Lacan shows how the letter is imbued with different meanings as it passes along through a series of individuals. The actual contents of the letter are irrelevant as its meaning is constituted by each different holder of the letter. Lacan is interested in how the letter, whose contents are never known (i.e. the subject has no direct access to the unconscious strata of speech that determines her or him), insists on being heard. His article on Poe uses the purloined letter as a substitute for the empty signifier, whose performative value (meaning) is entirely based on its contextual surroundings and not on an underlying meaning. He sees the insistence of the signifier as a repetitive compulsion that reflects the recurring displacement of an earlier trauma (absence, etc.) in the form of the letter (signifier) (*Yale Studies* 60). Similarly, in a separate essay, Lacan observes that the unconscious is ethical, it is a thirst for the truth, it seeks to reveal itself (*Four Fundamental* 33). Lacan points out that by speaking one expresses desire, a desire which results from the insistence of this letter (*Four Fundamental* 12).

realm of the unconscious, a sense of wholeness is experienced. For example, in the eighteenth line, the “divisive” hold that the signifiers maintain on the subject begins to recede. The speaker experiences the “savia” (18), not as a divisive force, but as a unifying energy. The use of the possessive pronoun, “nuestras” (20), reinforces the sensation of oneness, which the poet clearly associates with the unconscious world of the night.

The poem’s message, which recounts the poetic speaker’s attempt to return to a psychic state of wholeness with the outside world, also suggests other affinities to Lacan’s concept of the unconscious. Juan David Nasio stresses that for Lacan the unconscious cannot exist without it being recognized by a listening subject (3). Instead, it occurs “between two subjects” (3) as a type of agency produced by the intervention of another entity. Consequently, the unconscious realm of existence serves as a location where there may at least exist some momentary sensation of union and harmony. Interestingly, in Pacheco’s poem, it is at this locus where individual identity is lost, as evidenced by the word, “nuestras” (18), but it’s also where the subject loses his corporeal presence, as represented by use of “sombras” (19). As in Lacan, Pacheco’s use of the first person collective pronoun, “nuestras,” with the word, “sombras,” reinforces the idea of the unconscious as a space occurring outside of the individual, between the subject and the outside Other.

Although this poem fails to make any explicit political commentary, “Árbol entre dos muros” distinguishes itself in the way that it challenges conventional notions of subjectivity and epistemology. For example, the poem lacks concrete references to everyday reality (e.g. references to specific people, places, or contemporary events),

which would normalize the reader's psychic state toward conventional perceptions of subjective consciousness and the outside world as distinct, unproblematic entities. In addition, repeated references to nature accentuated by powerful verbs like "vibrar," "devorar," and "arder" allow for a number of interpretive possibilities relating to force, consumption and combustion. For example, the physical elements of nature vibrate from their contentious relationship with other outside elements. The day proceeds as a process of burning and devouring itself; that is, the elements are perpetually expending their own internal energies as they interact with the outside environment. Therefore, by employing forceful words like, "vibrar," "devorar" and "arder," the poet challenges conceptions of nature as a stable, harmonious process. Instead, he portrays nature as a dynamic process, whose elements (clouds, rocks, plants, etc.) are constantly redefining themselves based on their ongoing, and sometimes hostile, interaction with the other elements of the universe.

Furthermore, the poem's references to "letras" and "nombre" make it clear that the poet is not only attempting to apply these images to nature, but also to the signifying activities of language. According to this metapoetic interpretation, we understand that words, resembling the relationship between the physical elements of nature, derive their meaning based on their dynamic relationship to other words. That is, the word, "flower," may have meaning only as it is contrasted with a plant, a weed, a tree, or a bird that feeds on it, as well as a host of other subjective connotations the human individual may attach to it. Moreover, the signifying relationship is dynamic in that the connotations associated with the word, "flower," are constantly changing with time. The signifier will attain new meanings as the subject experiences the word in new contexts. The individual may

associate the word with perfume, or with fertility, or with union (weddings) or death (funerals). Therefore, the meaning of any given word is constantly being re-determined based on the word's relationship to other words. Therefore, unlike conventional notions of language, which show a stable and relatively fixed relationship between the word and the external object that it purportedly denotes, "Árbol" represents linguistic signification as a process that is highly dependent on the interrelationship between signifiers. This understanding of linguistic signification was initially introduced by Saussure, but is also prominent in postmodern thinkers like Lacan.

In addition, I have previously pointed out that Pacheco consciously employs structural forms that help shed light on the unconscious workings of textual significations. For example, his use of poetic devices rebel against conventional forms of prosaic speech in ways that may emulate the unconscious. In other words, Freud pointed out that the conscious differed from the subconscious in a number of ways. In The Interpretation of Dreams, Freud observes how dreams are represented in ways that can be contrary to what the individual considers legitimate or illegitimate in waking life (446). In addition, he also observed how separate dream events are presented as if occurring simultaneously (349), thus countering conventional linear conceptions of time that have distinct notions of both past and present. Similarly, Pacheco employs techniques that oppose conscious states of awareness in favor of the dream state. For example, in the first four lines of "Árbol entre dos muros," Pacheco uses exclusively the present tense, which, in addition to imparting a sense of subjective consciousness as a series of divided moments, evokes a dreamlike quality in the poem:

Sitiado entre dos noches
el día alza su espada de claridad,

hace vibrar al esplendor del mundo,
brilla en el paso del reloj al minuto. (1-4)

By placing the clause, “[s]itiado entre dos noches” (1) at the beginning of the sentence, the poet employs hyperbaton, also contributing to the poem’s dreamlike quality.

Moreover, the presence of asyndeton in lines two and three also challenges traditional syntactical structures, thus creating an oneiric effect and suggesting a surrealist atmosphere as well. Even the poem’s imagery, which relates the wild, chaotic forces of nature to our unconscious, further highlights the dreamlike quality in the poem.

The second poem, “Canción para escribirse en una ola,” continues to challenge conventional notions of subjectivity by again showing the network of linguistic signifiers as a distinct and inaccessible realm of thought. The title’s reference to the poem as a “canción” reflects the poem at its most primitive state. Considered by many literary historians as the oldest form of literature, poetry was initially sung or recited orally (Muller and Williams 335). Like “Árbol,” the poem’s imagery shows the process of signification as part of a wild, chaotic event akin to the cosmic forces of nature: “Las palabras del mar se entremezclan y estallan / cuando se hunde en la tierra el rumor de las olas” (“Canción” 5-6). As in Lacan, the entry into and return from language is operated by an underlying force of attraction and repulsion while the world of the unconscious opens and shuts itself off from alternating states of awareness.¹⁶

¹⁶ Similarly, Juan David Nasio observes that “psychical” energies underlie the interacting signifiers in the unconscious (29). Nasio also points out that Lacan was clear in his intention that *jouissance*, the orgasmic energy released within the unconscious, should not be misconstrued as an energetic entity since “energy is nothing more than the numerical value of a constant” (31). However, Nasio does accept metaphorical associations stating that “*jouissance* would be ‘energy’ if we would consider it a thrust that, emerging in the erogenous zone of the body, tends toward a goal, encounters obstacles, manages to open paths rendered not mathematically by a combinatory calculus” (32). I argue that Pacheco, like Nasio, is interested in the metaphorical similarities that relate the energies of desire in the mind to the energies of the outside world.

Although the symbolism in the second poem has changed, the dimensions between the unconscious and conscious mental states are more clearly distinguished. Notions of death and eternity, previously associated with the unconscious as the “muros” of night, are now associated with the sea: “Un caracol eterno son el mar y su nombre” (7). The blank shoreline, defined against the infinite sea, represents the passage into the symbolic, conscious world: “[el mar] se disuelve en la playa donde forma el cangrejo húmedas galerías” (3-4). The poem more explicitly recalls the Lacanian concept of the mirror stage as a simulation that reveals to the subject his own image: “El mar se vuelve espejo de la luna desierta” (9). The three key nouns of the sentence, “sea,” “mirror,” and “moon” are all associated with the lone adjective, “deserted,” which serves to instill “sea,” “mirror,” and “moon” with connotations of emptiness and death.

Like “Árbol entre dos muros,” the use of the impersonal pronoun, “se,” in the poem’s title redirects the production of language away from the conscious control of the subject and emphasizes the production of the text (i.e. in the case of this poem, the “canción”) in the site occupied by the signifying elements of the unconscious. By supposedly placing the creation of the text outside the intellectual grasp of the persona of the conscious author, the poem evokes Lacan’s claim that the subject in talking, “speaks of something else, that is, of something other than that which is in question when he speaks of himself, and which is the thing that speaks to you, a thing which, whatever he says, would remain forever inaccessible to him” (Ecrits 130).

Similar to “Árbol entre dos muros,” “Canción” does not make any overt political statements. However, we can begin to infer an underlying commentary regarding the general relationship of human beings with the outside world. For example, human

subjectivity continues to be represented as a type of isolation. In the first verse, Pacheco represents the human subject as a crab that exists “ante la soledad” (1). The speaker also relates the subject’s separation from the outside world to his creative abilities. Existing in a state of loneliness, the subject attempts to form “húmedas galerías que la marea destruye” (4). Therefore, in this passage, the poet reveals how the crab, or human, attempts to create as a result of his isolated and lonely existence. The passage provides clear metapoetic interpretations. Not only do the galleries represent physical works such as buildings, roads and houses, but they also represent the subject’s attempt to write poetically. Consequently, even though his attempts to write are destroyed by the ceaseless waves of the tides associated with the finite existence of matter, his words attempt to recapture a separate and infinite dimension of the unconscious, represented as “el rumor de las olas” (6). We can discern in this passage how poetry may be viewed as the most effective medium in recapturing an aura, or, at least, a spirit, of the unconscious world, which is, otherwise, inaccessible to the poet’s conscious existence.

There is an underlying attempt to break the pretenses of psychic unities, such as those of time and logic that are generally associated with our rational, conscious state of existence. For example, the present tense continues to be exclusively employed in a way that questions the concept of time as a chronological flow from past to present. The dense imagery continues and the multi-dimensional interpretive possibilities alluded to by Doudoroff (i.e. cosmic, natural, historic and personal) (147) evoke the impression of an elaborate, metaphorical chain operating in the unconscious.¹⁷ These multiple levels of

¹⁷ According to Lacan, we should recall that the signifiers operate in a diachronic fashion (metonymy) and in a synchronic fashion (metaphor) (Evans 188). Metaphor takes on key importance for Lacan and is the part of the signifying structure most responsible for meaning (Evans 112). Although Lacan generally sees the signifier and signified as eternally separated, he sees in metaphor the capacity of the signifier to pass

interpretation challenge the reader to move away from highly rationalized states of consciousness that tend toward a univocal understanding of the external world. In addition, the use of irregular syntactic structures like hyperbaton keeps the negotiation of meaning open in the text, thus preventing the reader from complacently accepting monolithic or logocentric interpretations of the text. In other words, by beginning the poem with a series of prepositional phrases, the poet defers the core components (subject and verb) to the end of the line. Therefore, the reader's mind tends to focus on a series of relatively disconnected images, marked by the leading prepositional phrases, until the line is completed by the presence of a subject and a verb.

"Canción" illustrate this point by varying its rhythmic pace that serves to question common notions of linear time progression. For example, the first four lines read:

Ante la soledad se extienden días quemados.
En la ola del tiempo el mar se agolpa,
Se disuelve en la playa donde forma el cangrejo
Húmedas galerías que la marea destruye. (1-4)

As the first three lines place the grammatical subject at the end of the line to describe the interplay of cosmic forces on a typical beach scene -- sun, waves, tide -- much of this first stanza reads at a relatively slow pace. Even the fourth line, which begins with the grammatical, direct object, "húmedas galerías," demonstrates the poetic technique of enjambment to maintain the slow pace of the poem. However, these first four lines gives way to the quickened pace of more colloquial syntax, which helps evoke the beach scene as the spontaneous moment and place of signification. In this line, the subject is placed at the beginning of the sentence: "Las palabras del mar se entremezclan y estallan" (5). The

into the signified and create a new signified. He sees the substitution of the Name of the Father for the desire of the mother as the fundamental, or paternal metaphor.

strong alliterative use of “r” in the sixth line with “tierra” and “rumor,” approximates the sound of the “wavelike” signifiers crashing in the unconscious, further highlighting the spontaneity of signification as an event purportedly occurring outside the control of the conscious subject.

The use of antithetical references to “day”/“night,” which is present in both “Árbol entre dos muros” and “Canción,” as well as in the rest of Los elementos, accentuates the unconscious as a coexisting, and perhaps, sovereign, dimension relative to conscious existence. For example, the first poem shows the dawning of a new day: “el día alza su espada de claridad” (2) and finishes in the “centro de la noche” (22). Therefore, by representing the poem as a sudden break of daylight separated before and after by two periods of darkness, Pacheco emphasizes the transitory and spontaneous nature of the textual formation. The text is uncontrolled, fleeting and outside the conscious control of the author. In fact, more often than not that the text controls him. In other words, the conscious subject becomes the vehicle, or the host, through which the signification of the unconscious acts.

Similarly, the second poem begins in daylight and ends at night. This foundational motif for Pacheco, associated with the birth of language in the mind’s consciousness, is scattered throughout Los elementos in other poems like “Jardín de arena,” “Mar que amanece,” “Égloga octava” and “Crecimiento del día.” In addition, each of these poems represents the unconscious as a holding place of language inaccessible to the conscious individual, closely recalling Lacan’s principle of the Real Order, which houses the network of signifiers. Furthermore, these poems frequently represent textual production as a spontaneous act, where the unconscious spills into the conscious realm of language.

These sudden moments of poetic lucidity turn on and off throughout the book. While critics like Oviedo (“La voz” 45-46) and Hoeksema (3) comment that the collection takes on a cyclical temporal structure due to its alternations between day and night, in many ways, the author structures time in a fragmented, seemingly uncalculated and spontaneous manner. Therefore, this fragmented structure of human consciousness undermines conventional notions of human subjectivity, which present the human individual as a distinct, unified entity.

It is clear in reading Los elementos that language is intimately involved in mediating the relationship between the poetic speaker and the other. Many of these poems use salt, or sand to symbolize the realm of the conscious speaker and the inaccessible realm of the Other. For example, in “Jardín de arena,” the mysterious “tú” of language is addressed again as the shore: “Eres la playa en donde nace el mar” (3). Pacheco’s use of asyndeton in lines three, four and five further clarifies the metaphoric chain at work in his poems: “Eres la playa en donde nace el mar, / el jardín pastoreado por las olas, / el alba con su séquito de espuma” (3-5); we see that the beachhead, which is composed of sand, is metaphorically equivalent to both “garden” and “daybreak,” ultimately suggesting that “beach,” “garden” and “daylight” serve as multiple, metaphorical representations for textual, or poetic creation. The following poem, “Mar que amanece,” also distinguishes the two dimensions separated by salt: “El otro mar nocturno / bajo la sal ha muerto” (8-9). In this poem, the “salt sea” is again associated with daylight, “el mar que amanece” while the “nocturnal sea” is associated with the site of the “otro” (8), or the site of night and death. Consequently salt, or sand, becomes a *leitmotiv* in many of Pacheco’s subsequent works to represent the material structure of language as the dividing line

between the finite world of our divided consciousness and the infinite world of the unconscious Other.

In spite of Los elementos' hermetic qualities, the poetic speaker's recurring desire to communicate with the outside world does invite some commentary from a social perspective. The outside environment, which was described as "todo" or "nada" in "Árbol entre dos muros," is increasingly personified using the second person pronoun, "tú." In "La materia deshecha," the "tú" is closely associated with Lacan's notion of the Other, in the form of death or destruction. Once again, the desire to communicate with the outside world is closely tied to the subject's use of language: "Ahora, te nombro, incendio, y en tu hoguera, / me reconozco: vi en tu llamarada / lo destruido y lo remoto" (9-11). In "La falsa vida," Pacheco uses the mirror motif again to repeat the Lacanian concept of the Other as the site that produces subjective consciousness: "Frágil perseguidor que eres tú mismo, / lo que has obligado a ser, en guardia siempre, / el minucioso espejo que no olvida" (9-11). In this poem, the mirror serves as an alter ego to the subject, constantly reminding him of his own "irrealidad" (7), that is, of his own finite existence. The mysterious, "tú" is fragile, in that its presence is ephemeral. Moreover, the illusive Other is inextricably linked to our subjective identity: "Atraviesas la noche en las manos de sueño, / pero el otro, implacable, / no te abandona" ("La falsa vida" 4-6).

At key moments in Los elementos, the subject's desire to correspond with the outside world is presented in highly erotic terms. For example, in "Égloga octava," its titular reference to the classic eclogue, made famous by Latin poet, Virgil in his work, Eclogues, recalls the traditional poem featuring a dialogue between two shepherds. However, in this poem, we see that the conversation occurs between the poetic speaker and the

ephemeral Other, represented as the beloved. The poem clearly indicates an erotic attachment between the two:

La luz nos atraviesa.
De tu cuerpo se adueña y lo decora.
El fuego que te besa
se consume en la hora,
diluida en la tarde asoladora. (7-11)

We should remember that “luz” and “fuego” were previously associated with the moment of poetic and linguistic expression. In this poem, desire and language mediate the poet’s attempt to redeem himself from his separated and lonely existence. The eroticized relationship between the poetic speaker and the Other recall Lacan’s notion of *jouissance*. For Lacan, language provided human beings with a transitory sense of “libidinal normalization” (*Ecrits* 2) in their search to find an object as a substitute for their feeling of absence.¹⁸

Through this relationship between desire, language and the individual, *Los elementos*’ poems begin to voice a rudimentary moral attitude that also brings to mind Lacan, who observed a close correlation between sin and the legal prohibitions inherent in language. Lacan regards the “Law of the Father” as a “signifier, a linguistic entity” (*Ethics* 170), the transcendental signifier symbolized by the phallus. The French philosopher explains the relationship between law and sin: “[s]in needed the Law, St. Paul said, so he could become a great sinner ... so that he could conceive of the possibility [of sin]” (177). For Lacan, it is our entry into language that paradoxically cuts

¹⁸ Sexual passion, for Lacan, is closely linked to human symbolic existence. However, desire at its most base form is fundamental and ultimately “incompatible with language” (*Ecrits* 275). For Lacan, desire only manifests itself as sexual attraction upon passage into symbolic existence with an external object that stands in for the Other. Lacan associated this attraction to phallic *jouissance*, which is the libidinous attraction for the other’s desire. Lacan would later distinguish his definition of “phallic” *jouissance* from a feminine *jouissance*, which he stated was ineffable (*Encore* 71); this is a patriarchal view.

us off from the state of consciousness that we desire most, a state of seemingly infinite joy, or *jouissance*. Lacan refers to the “Law” as the moral prohibitions proscribed by the paternal, or authority, figures of society. It is only through language that we have knowledge of these moral prohibitions and only through language that we develop the sensation of transgression.

Allusions to sin and guilt reminiscent of Lacan, such as Pacheco’s reference to “puerta roja” in “Árbol entre dos muros,” take on increasingly religious connotations in Los elementos. In “Tarde enemiga,” late afternoon marks a point of interstice between day and night (i.e. the conscious world and the unconscious), suggesting a primordial wound, “algún milagro herido, / del domingo culpable” (3-4). The references to wound, the Sabbath (“domingo”), and guilt, which recall Christ’s Crucifixion, reinforce the association of guilt with a religious essence. Similarly, in the prose poem, “De algún tiempo a esta parte,” consciousness of time, which Pacheco closely associates with our symbolic existence, suggests the religious connotation of original sin: “Hoy se limita a entrar por la ventana para decirte que ya dieron las siete y tienes por delante la expiación de tu condena” (20). In my opinion, the poet continues to use religious allusions to evoke a sense of original sin because, echoing Lacan, he shows in universal terms how feelings of sin and guilt are an unavoidable byproduct of consciousness gained by the symbolic existence of people. Like the reference of “Árbol entre dos muros” to a “puerta roja,” “De algún tiempo” shows a window representing the passageway that separates unconscious existence from a “condemned” state of existence, again associated with sin and language. Nevertheless, instead of proposing a new moral guideline, the poems of Los elementos counters the conventional notion of sin as condemned by a divine and

unquestionable standard of conduct. In its place, they posit sinful “awareness” as the inevitable outcome of our symbolic, or linguistic, existence. In other words, each human being develops feelings of guilt, which she or he associates with sin, not because of any particular wrongdoing, but because of a self-directed sense of blame for the inalienable division from each other that all human beings experience.

While the subject’s desire to reunite with the elusive Other often manifests itself through feelings of eroticism and guilt, we can also see how the relationship between the human subject and language reveals other aspects regarding Pacheco’s ethics. These moral notions we use to relate to the other members of the world’s community, which are also tied to Pacheco’s political and social ideology, slowly emerge in Pacheco’s introductory volume of poems. For example, the dialectic between the conscious, speaking subject and the unconscious dimension of the Other are increasingly distinguished in terms of harmony and violence. For example, throughout the book, references to the steady beat of the rain, or the rhythmic crash of the waves, indicate a world where rhythm predominates over matter, and tranquility over tension. “Tarde enemiga” refers to music as a type of dreamlike language that exists without symbols: “La música, el oleaje de los sueños sin nombre” (1). The word, “oleaje,” suggesting the steady beat of the waves accentuated by the alliterative effect of “s” in “sueños sin nombre,” gives emphasis to the primacy of rhythm over symbolic content. In “Jardín de arena,” peace is associated with the absence of conscious time: “Cuando la lluvia a solas se desploma en el río / entre la luz y el agua se disuelven las horas” (1-2). Similarly, in “Inscripciones,” rain and music are more closely linked to a primordial dimension devoid of matter and temporal awareness:

Contra el muro del día
el mundo llueve.

...

Una vez, de repente, a medianoche
se despertó la música. Sonaba
como debió de sonar antes que el mundo
supiera que es la música el lamento
de la hora sin regreso... ("2" 2-3, "3" 1-5)

Just as the unconscious realm is associated with tranquility, the realm of matter, language and consciousness of time is increasingly connected to violence. We have already observed in poems like "Canción para escribirse en una ola" how violence is commonly identified with the production of language as a collision of opposing forces. We can see the beginning of a rudimentary ideological commentary in the way Pacheco represents language as a violent seizure of meaning. For example, in the prose poem, "Crecimiento del día," the production of language becomes an encapsulation, or imprisonment, of infinite thought, reduced to the limiting form of a word: "Símbolos aferrados a la hora que se cumple dentro de mí" (30). Similarly, in "La materia deshecha," the production of the text is linked to a sense of submission: "Vuelve a tocar, palabra, el vasallaje / donde su propio fuego se destruye" (3-4). In my opinion, the text, or word, is a type of "vassalage" in the way that words fail to encapsulate the infinite complexity of the universe. Moreover, language is subordinate to outside reality in that it synchronically substitutes for a reality that is always changing. Therefore, the word's power to reflect the outside world is ultimately doomed to failure as much as over time its truth values tend to be refined and modified in light of new insights and discoveries.

In other poems, the poet can be seen both as a victim and unwitting perpetrator of this regime of violence. While the poet was compared to a lonely crab in "Canción," in "Inscripciones," he takes on the violent qualities of a fierce predator: "Ya devorado por la

tarde el tigre / se hunde en sus manchas, / sus feroces marcas, / legión perpetua que lo asedia, hierba, / hojarasca, prisión / que lo hace tigre” (“5” 1-6). Pacheco’s developing ethics and ideology with which he shows how people interact with the outside world, implicitly demonstrates that violence is an integral part of our experience as symbolic beings. Instead of portraying moral concepts of good and evil as fundamental laws, he represents violence as a basic law of the universe. Therefore, by presenting human beings as a tiger, Pacheco’s ideology debunks conventional beliefs that give great value to human principles of existence (i.e. liberty, equality, etc.) and, instead, shows humans as voracious animals intent upon perpetuating the violence of the universe.

A number of critics like Hoeksema, Oviedo, and Doudoroff have ascribed the pervasive sensation of destruction in Pacheco’s first book to the Heraclitian concepts of flux and order.¹⁹ The ancient Greek philosopher theorized an underlying constant principle governing the universe, which, paradoxically, manifested itself as the perpetual movement of the universe toward fragmentation and change. For Heraclitus, this governing principle of the cosmos, or *logos*, was a result of the contrary principles of opposition and strife. Although Pacheco will wait until his second volume of poetry, El reposo, to explicitly connect the Heraclitian concept of repose as the harmonic counter to the destructive (and creative) aspect of the *logos* (see Pacheco’s “II.2: ‘Don de Heráclito’”), Hoeksema observes that these dual forces of destruction and harmony will “establish the poles of tension ... [in] all his subsequent poetry” (4).

¹⁹ In his commentary to Heraclitus, Dennis Sweet observes that for Heraclitus the world exists as a result of the contrary principles of opposition and strife (59). Heraclitus posits that most people live ignorant of the “rational structure of the world ... and fail to see beyond their own limited perspectives” (64). In addition, he offers other semantic associations for *logos*, among them “selecting,” “proportion,” “thought,” “reason,” “law,” “plan,” “speech,” and “statement” (57-8). He will say in “Fragment 67” that the *logos* is both day and night, war and peace and satiety and hunger (29). Thus, Heraclitus offered to poets like Pacheco a way of understanding the world based on strife and paradox.

In developing a poetics whereby the symbolizing forces of the mind act similarly to the natural forces of the outer world, Pacheco reveals how linguistic and cosmic forces manifest themselves with both destructive and creative capabilities.²⁰ Therefore, poems like “Canción para escribirse en una ola,” should be read not only as a violent collision of signifying elements but also as the creative “rebirth” of a new consciousness. Like the physical forces of the universe, language, or linguistic creation, is formed through a violent process of interaction for Pacheco. Implicitly, Pacheco challenges basic human assumptions regarding good and evil as well as the transparency with which language is assumed to form our thought systems.

In addition, I believe the poems merge Heraclitus’ underlying order with Lacanian psychoanalytic concepts to reveal the governing motor of the signifying system in the human subject. For Lacan, desire, or *desir*, represented the “essence of man” (Four Fundamental 275). Heraclitus believed that the *logos* generally operated outside of the limiting constraints of knowledge; Lacan positioned desire in the Real Order, the world of the unconscious that housed signifying chains, which could not be known consciously by the subject. Therefore, both desire and the *logos* pose epistemological problems. Lacan saw desire as neither good nor bad, but as the sustaining force that allowed the subject to attain some type of equilibrium in its build up and discharge of psychic energies.

Pacheco reflects Lacan in Pacheco’s personification of the underlying order of the *logos* as a type of desire that shapes and forms linguistic communication. For example, in the book’s title poem, the poetic speaker observes: “la destrucción se sacia / en

²⁰ The idea of an underlying force or energy with both destructive and creative capabilities is not a strictly Western concept.

ciudades vencidas que la ceniza afrenta” (“Los elementos de la noche” 4-5). While the poem connects this thirst or desire to a type of cosmic energy, its highly metapoetic qualities, which are consistent with all the poems of Los elementos, for that matter, suggest that this violent force is also imposing itself upon the text as part of signification. Following this metapoetic scheme, “ciudades vencidas” (5) not only represents the actual cities constructed by human beings, which are associated with civilization, but they may also represent the constructed text trying to hold out against the relentless, polysemic interaction of significations; acting similarly to the energies of the *logos*, the latter are constantly changing the meaning in the text. Other poems also represent the *logos* as an ever-present desire, or force, which can be interpreted on both cosmic and metapoetic levels. In “Mar que amanece,” the force is presented as a type of thirst: “Alza [el mar] su sed de nube vuelta espuma” (2). Similarly, in “El sol oscuro,” the sun, presented as a life-giving tree again, nurses off the emptiness of night. Furthermore, the sun is portrayed as an ancient entity, predating the existence of the poem’s speaker: “el árbol de ese tiempo en que no duro [“yo,” el que habla en el poema]] / se nutre de la muerte y lo futuro / y la tierra” (6-8). In the prose poem, “De algún tiempo a esta parte,” the force, identified with the sun, is never satiated: “Aquí está el sol con su único ojo, la boca escudefuego que no se hastía de calcinar la eternidad” (20).

The recurring use of the sun motif alludes to the Aztec myth of *el quinto sol*. According to Aztec mythology, *El quinto sol* represents the fifth and current period of the universe. The previous four periods, which were also “soles,” were dominated by different Aztec gods, and each period ended in cataclysmic fashion. After the fourth period ends by flood, the Aztec gods mutually agree to sacrifice themselves, in order to

give birth and movement to the fifth sun, which will allow the world to be repopulated by humans (Phillips 158-59). However, the fifth sun, like the four periods before it, is also finite, and will end with an earthquake (158). This passage in Pacheco's poem, with its personification of the sun, not only portrays the underlying energies of the universe as a type of thirst, but it also recalls the legend of the fifth sun in order to hint at a construction/destruction dualism as part of the organizational and cyclical structure of the universe. In addition, the passage hints at the use of an Aztec theme that is to take a more prominent position in Pacheco's second book, El reposo, and is part of the author's cultural roots as a Mexican writer.

The idea of the *logos* as an order that underlies the make-up of our universe has become a central point of attack for many postmodern thinkers. Even Lacan was critiqued by his French rival and contemporary, Jacques Derrida, for being logocentric in his notion of the transcendental signifier.²¹ Lacan clearly asserted that there was no reality that preceded discourse and that every reality is founded on and defined by language (Encore 32). However, despite this bold pronouncement, on other occasions Lacan asserted that there was some correspondence between the signifier and the signified, which might be interpreted as some declaration of a prediscursive reality. For example, Lacan admits to certain intermittent correspondences between the outside

²¹ Derrida's critique centered on Lacan's essay on Poe's, "The Purloined Letter" in which Lacan uses Poe's short story to show how the anonymously authored letter imposes its meaning differently on each of the story's characters, all of whom interpret the letter from their own subjective standpoints. From this perspective, each individual is determined by a unique transcendental signifier that determines his or her existence. Derrida accused Lacan of imposing a meaning on Poe's text by analyzing the displacement of the signifier as a signified, "and as the recounted object in a short story" (48). In a rebuttal, Barbara Johnson pointed out that Derrida's insistence that the meaning of the purloined letter be relocated back with the story's mother, Marie Bonaparte, where it can be read openly, is also an imposition of a meaning and in itself a logocentric explanation (477, 483-84, 490). She also points out that Lacan's essay on Poe's short story was written to illustrate a psychoanalytical point rather than as a critical literary essay that attempted to impose a univocal meaning on Poe's short story (465).

referent and signifier, which he called “*points de capiton*.” He stated it was a necessity for a minimum number of these *points de capiton*, which function similarly to his notion of metaphor, to be present for communication to take place (Psychosis 268).

Nevertheless, even if Lacan’s notion of the transcendental signifier constitutes logocentric thought, he remained reticent about the individual’s ability to locate this master signifier that determined his or her existence, and he remained skeptical about language’s ability to faithfully reflect outside reality.

Similarly, Pacheco’s poems like “Árbol entre dos muros,” reveal little about the outside world. In this poem, outside reality is repeatedly associated with vague concepts of wholeness and emptiness. In “Luz y silencio,” the speaker observes how “reality” is framed by language: “Todo lo que creíste es falso, / Se hundieron las palabras con que empezó tu tiempo” (7-8). Like its symbolic counterparts in the material world (i.e. the physical elements), language fails to capture or reflect the outside world, which is constantly changing: “Signos que borraré el agua o el viento” (“De algún” 20). Even though Pacheco, at times, does show some correspondence between the outside world (i.e. the signified) and the linguistic signifier, these intermittent points of contiguity, like Lacan’s *points de capiton*, cannot be identified or maintained with any lasting or quantifiable precision.

In fact, both Lacan and Pacheco’s shared skepticism towards language’s ability to reflect “reality” reveals a key difference between their views on language and Heraclitian thought. For example, Pacheco, like Lacan, identifies language as part of the imperfect formation of our human subjectivity. Both present subjective consciousness as inherently divided and reinforced by our symbolic existence. Heraclitus, on the other hand, saw the

logos as representative of both the divine word and the operating principle of the universe. For example, Sweet observes that the “purpose behind Heraclitus’ adoption of the semantically rich *logos* is to emphasize that the structural formation of the cosmos, the rational order of the mind, and our linguistic ability to communicate ... all share a common feature” (59). Contrary to Heraclitus, we see how Pacheco’s poems, like Lacan’s understanding that language always fell short of its stated goal of communication, deviate from associations of language with perfection, reason and order.²²

Consideration of the varied formal structures of the poems of Los elementos also reveals how linguistic structure or form can frame or bias our thought systems. For example, scattered throughout the book are a multitude of diverse poetic forms: fixed and blank verse, quartets, eclogues, sonnets and prose poems. In poems like the previously mentioned, “Egloga octava,” that express a sudden moment of erotic intensity, end rhyme and fixed metrical schemes are often present. The poem alternates between the traditional seven and eleven meter verses associated with the eclogue, which in Spanish literature is most closely associated with the Renaissance lyricist, Lope de Vega. The rhyme scheme of “aBabB” helps augment the sensual impact of the poem:

La luz nos atraviesa.
De tu cuerpo se adueña y lo decora.
El fuego que te besa
se consume en la hora.
diluida en la tarde asoladora. (6-10)

²² For Lacan, a major characteristic of language was that of saying something quite different from what is literally being said (Lemaire 188). Lacan observes a “certain incompatibility between desire and speech” (*Ecrits* 275) that prevented speech from communicating an underlying truth, and Lacan understood that even with psychoanalysis there may be a “residue [of resistance] which may be what is essential” (*Ego* 321).

On the other hand, prose poems often are used to create a sensation of psychic dissipation. For example, the first two poems of the second section, “Los elementos de la noche” and “Tarde enemiga,” resemble many of the other poems of Los elementos in using dense imagery, a hermetic style, and hyperbaton. However, the third poem, “De algún tiempo a esta parte,” immediately changes the rhythm of the previous two poems with its prosaic style. I have included below the last nine lines of “Tarde enemiga” as well as the first two sentences of “De algún tiempo” for comparative purposes.

Sobre la paz de este final,
 De este río que prosigue para aumentar su muerte,
 La hora es el cadáver de otra hora abolida.
 El tiempo abre las alas.
 Se aleja el día hacia ninguna parte.
 ¿Cómo atajar la sombra
 Si nada permanece,
 Si ha sido nuestra herencia dualidad del polvo? (“Tarde enemiga,” ll. 10-17)

.....

Aquí está el sol con su único ojo, la boca escupe fuego que no se hastía de calcinar la eternidad. Y como un rey vencido, observa desde el trono la dispersión de sus vasallos. (“De algún tiempo a esta parte” 20)

In the above passage from “Tarde enemiga,” the poet slows the pace of the poem, by placing prepositional phrases prior to the verbal phrase in the first three lines. Hyperbaton is again present in the fifth line as the poet positions the grammatical subject, “el día” (14), after the verb. The rhythmic pace is further slowed by the use of asyndeton in the last two lines of “Tarde enemiga.” In contrast, we see how the rhythmic pace quickens in the following poem, “De algún tiempo a esta parte.” The grammatical sentences are arranged like prose, and are not separated into fragments as is common in more traditional poetry. Although some syntactic inversions are present, such as the insertion of “como un rey vencido” prior to the verbal phrase, “observa,” the sentence reads at a much quicker pace than the previous poem.

Consequently, by varying the form of poetic presentation, Pacheco creates sudden shifts in the psychic state of the reader, thus denaturalizing conventional forms of language and challenging the reader to consider the way that the formal structures of language can limit or obscure the way we understand and act regarding the world around us. We may even perceive in the ambiguous quality associated with the poem's title, "De algún tiempo a esta parte" a semblance of the psychic dissipation that the prose structure of the poem helps create. In other words, the vague references to time, "algún tiempo" and space, "de esta parte," emphasize that the need to have a contextual benchmark for communication to take place. Therefore, by freeing the reader from a specific time reference, such as 3 p.m., which is based on the accepted convention of a 24 hour day, and by freeing the reader from a specific place, such as Mexico City, as it may appear on a map, north of Puebla and south of Monterrey, the poet loosens the constraints of contextual references generally required for effective communication. The effect on the reader is freedom, or dissipation, but also a certain amount of anxiety, by recognizing the limitations of linguistic communication.

Even though Pacheco foregrounds the way language fails to reflect accurately the outside world, he is searching for a new way of speaking that can bridge the divided state between subject/outer world and signifier/signified. The poem, "Estancias," submits that perhaps through dreams, or through poetry that emulates the dream experience, one can achieve a transitory sense of union. However, in order to preclude any enduring reconciliation with the other in our symbolic existence, the poem evokes Lacan's mirror stage again to show that the union between self and the other is only complete in a mythic, dream state: "Solo en el sueño, azogue y transparencia, caminamos desiertos pero

unidos” (“Estancias” 13-14). While privileged in its ability to evoke momentary feelings of transcendence, poetry ultimately fails in permanently restoring the human subject back to a primordial perception of oneness with the outer world. The poetic speaker observes: “ningún poema recogerá en su eco este lamento. / Llega a su fin el doloroso tema” (“Estancias” 25-26). Using sand to connote our symbolic experience, poetic language becomes a mixed blessing, “la confusa arena / todo cuanto me salva o encadena” (“Presencia” 12-13).

In spite of the poet’s search for a redemptive program for humanity’s exiled condition, the final poems of the last half of Los elementos can only offer poetry as a temporary source of consolation for our divided, symbolic existence; that is, the use of basic words of language, such as the subject pronouns, “I,” “you,” “he,” “she,” etc., exacerbates the fundamental division of people from each other and from the rest of the world. However, poetry, as a unique form of language that is different from standard prose, may be able to create some sense of unity within this otherwise inalienable feeling of separation. The poet, who exists “without a name” [“náufrago sin nombre” (“Éxodo” 5)], emerges as the hero that can redeem humankind’s isolation through a revolutionary poetics. Recalling Lacan, who also saw in the death drive the desire to create (Ethics 212), the poet becomes a type of demiurge, “el que clavó sus armas en la piel de un dios muerto” (“Éxodo” 9).²³ Similarly, the poem “Éxodo” privileges the poet’s mastery of

²³ Rivero [-Potter] points out the notion of the demiurge in such predecessor writers as Ruben Darío, Julio Cortázar and Vicente Huidobro and others like Julieta Campos. Darío saw the writer as a demiurge, who, having received inspiration from the Muse, “fecunda [la obra]” (23). Campos and Cortázar both see the artist as a demiurge, yet the work, once written, remains independent of the artist. Pacheco, on the other hand, sees the poet as a warrior fighting against eternal, “psychological” banishment from a mythic god (“la piel de un dios muerto” “Éxodo” 9), who uses his writing ability to restore human existence to a sense of wholeness. The work becomes a text produced from the battle with this mythic god, a god with clear similarities to Lacan’s concept of the Other.

linguistic expression as the frontline of defense against the alienating effect which people experience with respect to the rest of the world due to our symbolic existence.

The final poem of Los elementos, which is divided into ten parts, ends with a plea to the unnamed “tú,” which is linked to language, night, and death: “Y tú, sal de la noche, sal eterna / Dame la luz sagrada de tu cuerpo” (“Crecimiento del día: 9” 3-4). The allusion to “cuerpo” accentuates the sensual qualities of the moment, suggesting an erotic union between the poetic speaker and the outside “tú.” Immediately following the passage, the erotic moment is intensified with the presence of end rhyme (ABBA ABBA CDD CDD) and fixed meter, as the poem enters into the tenth and final part of “Crecimiento;” it is also the concluding poem of Los elementos. The poet employs the classical form of a sonnet once again, hinting at the possibility of a transcendental experience with the other through poetry:

Nuestra será la noche. Será tuya
La honda oquedad sin nombre, ese vacío
Donde reina la nada, el poderío... (“Crecimiento del día: 10” 9-11)

It is not surprising that Pacheco’s first book ends on a paradoxical note. From the sixth to the twelfth line, the separation of the subject and other vanishes. The moment exists outside the notions of linear time that divide the past and future from the present. A mythic moment arises as the two entities unite to experience the passionate sensation of oneness: “[n]uestra será la noche” (9). The poetic use of paradox is conspicuous as the air is both silent and murmuring (6). The poem’s speaker occupies the space of the Other, which is once again addressed using the second person pronoun. For a brief moment, there is no language: “[s]erá tuya / la honda oquedad sin nombre, ese vacío / donde reina la nada” (9-11). Nonetheless, the linguistic symbol, represented as sand or

salt throughout the volume, prohibits the continuation of the poetic moment. The final poem ends with the “instante perpetuo” (12) vanishing from “la arena que a su paso te destruya” (14). Unable to perpetually postpone the subject’s symbolic existence, language intervenes to destroy the mythic moment of oneness.

Although the metapoetic texts of Los elementos recall Paz in their exploration of poetry as a solution to the existential condition of humankind, Doudoroff accurately points out that Pacheco remains much more skeptical about the redemptive function of myth in poetry than Paz (145-46). Pacheco’s poetry, more so than Paz’s, investigates the angst of the human being as a universal condition. There is no explicit critique of an overtly rational Western society, nor does his recourse to eroticism or Eastern mysticism express the same optimism in transcendence. In a preliminary note to Ayer es nunca jamás (1978), Pacheco outlines the responsibilities of the poet caught in a type of Sisyphean struggle to maintain language in its highest communicative state, even though the lapse of time is constantly altering the context and communicative capacities of the poem’s signification: “Reescribir es negarse a capitular ante la avasalladora imperfección” (9). Therefore, Pacheco accepts the lack of transcendence in his poetry in as much as the re-written poem is imperfect by never fully revealing with exactitude the outside world. Interestingly, the emphasis on “avasalladora imperfección” not only recalls the use of the term “vasallaje” in the third line of “La materia deshecha,” but it also links a primordial sense of violence to the human individual’s entry into the symbolic world. From my perspective, the poet, or human, by writing or speaking, creates an appropriation of the outside world that reinforces and constitutes his own sense of separation from that outside world; Pacheco accepts that this separation can never be

permanently overcome, but he sees the poet's responsibility as being one which crafts a momentary, communicative experience.

If we evaluate Los elementos from the standpoint of language's effect on the subjective consciousness and its relationship to the outer world, we can understand how Pacheco foregrounds language as the fundamental medium by which the subject views and interfaces with his surrounding environment. By symbolically connecting the energies of attraction and repulsion in nature to the signifying effects of our unconscious, the poems of Los elementos synthesize notions of both Heraclitus and Lacan. On a cosmic level, night is necessary for day ("Árbol entre dos muros,"), wholeness evolves from emptiness ("El sol oscuro"), and collisions between the cosmic elements of the universe provide for a restructuring of the world's physical elements and a new series of transformations. Similarly, on a metapoetic level, the violent interaction of signifying elements presents creative possibilities as well. The independent movement of signifiers provides the spark of the poetic moment, a brief feeling of wholeness (e.g. "Árbol entre dos muros," "Canción para escribirse") .

However, the poet stops short of delineating a clearly discernible ideological program that would disclose how language may be restructured to accommodate a more harmonious and peaceful society. The hermetic style and the number of interpretive levels of these early poems make it difficult to distinguish the exact relationship between the poet, language and the outer world. At times, he expresses confidence in language's ability to reveal to us an underlying order; yet, at other times, he expresses skepticism toward comprehending the world we inhabit. Likewise, Pacheco positions language as part of the corrupted universe in which we live, but he ironically posits language, and

primarily poetic language, as a medium through which people may find some sense of relief from our symbolic existence. Consequently, Los elementos must be seen as Pacheco's preliminary commentary on the ethical and ideological implications of language in its analysis of the relationship between the "self" and the other. Nonetheless, he will leave to his second volume of poetry a more complete elaboration of his ideology that emphasizes the prominence of language in shaping and influencing the individual's interactions with the rest of the other entities of the universe.

Most critics like Doudoroff (149-50), Hoeksema (4), Oviedo (43-44) and de Villena (24, 29) consider Pacheco's second book, El reposo del fuego (1966), as a logical continuation of the thematical material of the first. Like his first volume, El reposo is divided into three sections, although de Villena has observed that El reposo is less varied and diverse (24).²⁴ Although in some respects El reposo is a repetition of the thematic concerns of Los elementos, it can also be seen as the continuing refinement and application of language's role in mediating the inevitable confrontation between the subject and the other. Therefore, in my analysis of El reposo, I will show

- 1) how the poems of El reposo further reveal a developing ideology by expressing Heraclitian notions of order/disorder, or form/substance, in an increasingly political and historical context;
- 2) how the poems more clearly reflect Lacanian structures of subjectivity and epistemology by depicting the elusive reality framed by language in our thought systems;
- 3) how El reposo advances an ideology by proposing a new way to "see" the world that allows language to admit paradox and contradiction as a privileged form of poetic expression.

El reposo's first line expresses human existence as a "disaster" in absolute terms:

"[n]ada altera el desastre" (1). Like Los elementos, El reposo's hermetic language makes

²⁴ Following Pacheco's "authored" poems in his first edition of Los elementos is a section of translations of other poets. The translations were excluded in subsequent editions of Los elementos.

it difficult to determine the precise nature of the “disaster” to which Pacheco refers. El reposo also recalls Los elementos in its depiction of a world driven by outside forces of tension and chaos. The book reiterates the apocalyptic tone of Los elementos by characterizing human life as a state of exile from a peaceful, unified existence, and one in which people are caught amidst the dueling forces of the universe. If we accept El reposo as a continuation of Los elementos, we see that the text also lends itself to psychoanalytic (i.e. Lacanian) and cosmic readings. When viewed in these terms, the “disaster” to which Pacheco refers is not only cosmic violence from the clashing fields of the world’s physical elements, but also the inescapable feeling of isolation suffered from our existence as symbolic entities.

Like Los elementos, the dueling cosmic forces in El reposo recall the Heraclitian notion of an underlying unity resulting from the perpetual collision and interaction of the earth’s physical elements (i.e. wind, fire, etc.). This primary order guiding the physical elements of the earth is related to “la incendiaria sed del tiempo” (“I.1” 8). In other words, the poet represents time as the obscure force of attraction and repulsion that acts on the elements of the universe, inciting each element to exist in a state of constant friction with the other surrounding elements. In addition, the first poem represents fire as the symbolic equivalent of temporal progression.²⁵ The world is a bonfire, an “hoguera” (5), seething in finite time with the blood of sacrifice. The “hoguera” also recalls the Aztec gods associated with the myth of the *quinto sol*, who sacrificed themselves by jumping into a giant fire. Furthermore, the poem reveals a Heraclitian sense of paradox

²⁵ Heraclitus also uses fire to symbolize the *logos* (fragment 66 and 67). It may represent the system of opposing forces (in fragment 67), and may represent change, but it also represents something unalterable amid change (Sweet 58).

as the fire also takes on qualities of peace, serenity and death: “llama altiva, / o fija y ya serena / y como muerta” (12-14). Paradox, which was used to give particular emphasis to both the creative and destructive possibilities of the *logos* in Los elementos, is used in this poem to highlight its volatile qualities (e.g. “hoguera” and “la incendiara sed”) but also volatility’s semantic opposite: stillness and tranquility. Thus, for Pacheco, the *logos* primarily reveals itself as the temporal series of relationships between the universe’s elements constantly redefining themselves according to their changing states of tension.

When read from a Lacanian perspective, we see how the process of signification is symbolically connected to the dueling pressures of attraction and repulsion in the physical world. Like Los elementos, the use of reflexive verbs with grammatical subjects of nature (e.g. “el aire”) represents the signifying elements of the unconscious as an autonomous activity: “desciende el aire / a la más pétrea hoguera / y se consume” (4-6). The formation of human subjectivity is related to a leaf, “una hoja,” suggesting paper, or the blank tablet on which writing and subjectivity take place. This leaf, surrounded and encompassed by the burning “hoguera” (5), blows precariously. The human subject, “hoja al aire, tristísima” (7), remains perpetually divided from the external other, a mere consequence of external forces rather than a conscious architect of his destiny.

El reposo’s second poem alternates first and second person pronouns to highlight the inherent feeling of division between the subject and the outer world.

Hoy rompo este dolor en que se yergue
La realidad carnívora e intacta.
Hiendo tu astilla inmóvil, mansedumbre (“1.2” 1-3)

Quemo tu lumbré humillación, tu aguja,
Solidaria del vértigo, que iguala
Vagos trazos de un áspid en polvo (“1.2” 8-10)

The use of words like “astilla” (3) and “aguja” (8), suggestive of the phallic signifier, heightens the Lacanian sense of division.²⁶ In addition, Pacheco continues much of the same symbolism of Los elementos, which consistently recalled Lacan by showing human existence as separated from a realm of infinite wholeness, but also of emptiness. For example, in El reposo, the angst of mankind derives from an inaccessible reality that is “carnívora e intacta” (2) and “sin cuerpo” (6). The reference to “vagos trazos de un áspid” (10) also recalls Lacan’s relationship of symbolic language and sin, which he sees as inextricably linked to the human individual’s state of isolation. The reference to the asp has a number of associations including danger, double-dealing and healing. In this context, I think of the Biblical portrayal in Genesis 3 of the serpent in the Garden of Eden, who coaxes Eve, and indirectly, Adam into eating from the Tree of Knowledge. We may remember that their consumption of the apple delivers the two into a state of hyper-consciousness in which both Adam and Eve recognize for the first time their own nakedness. Therefore, the “vagos trazos” may refer to the close association between language and knowledge. In Pacheco’s poem, one can also discern how the passage syncretizes the Biblical story of the serpent with Lacan’s ideas of the human acquisition of language and its relationship to a primordial sense of guilt. Moreover, in emulating the form of the question mark, the “vagos trazos” also recall the Lacanian idea of absence and the unknown, for which the phallic signifier substitutes.

²⁶ I am referring primarily to Lacan’s fundamental concept that the subject is divided. This idea of a gap, splinter or “astilla” goes back to Lacan’s mirror stage where the subject first begins to feel alienated in encountering its own image. Later he clarifies “The human being has a special relation with his own image [encountered in his mirror stage]- a relation of gap, of alienating tension” (Seminar. Book II 323). The gap is later expressed in terms of the Other: “The relation of the subject to the Other is entirely produced in a process of gap” (Four Fundamental 206).

Furthermore, Pacheco mixes these Lacanian-like allusions with other terms in a progressively political and social context. For example, by showing human existence as a kind of “masedumbre” and “humillación” before “tu astilla” (3) and “tu aguja” (8), he regards human existence as a kind of subservience to a higher, violent or painful power. By closely connecting this higher power to language (“vagos trazos de un áspid”), Pacheco foregrounds the power relations implicit in the human being’s symbolic correspondence with the outside world.

In these introductory poems of El reposo, reality remains highly impressionistic and subjective for the poetic subject. The individual is aware of reality’s presence in as much as it besieges the subject with a relentless sensation of violence (“I.2” 4). This destruction surrounds the subject, possibly even encompassing him, but it is also presented in paradoxical terms of peace. The absence of concrete descriptors (e.g. references to specific times, places, historical events, etc.) make this “reality” difficult to grasp, although frequent references to “humillación” and “masedumbre” indicate an increasingly ideological interpretation that suggest domination and subservience as a part of this external force which surrounds, encompasses and even dictates human existence.

Other passages link the physical elements of the universe to environmental pollutants, thus hinting at an emerging ecological critique. Possibly deriving from the growing pollution problem being experienced around the world in the sixties, and particularly in Pacheco’s native home of Mexico City, the poem’s speaker relates these elements to: “las viscosas / manchas del aire tóxico” (“I.2” 4-5). Once again, the passage can be read from a Lacanian perspective where the signifiers act as pollutants by exacerbating the subject’s state of isolation. Nevertheless, rather than passively agonize over the “polluted” state of

his mind, the poetic speaker decides to address the nature of the evasive “reality” that besieges him: “Hoy rompo este dolor en que se yergue / la realidad.../ cerco lo que me asedia” (“I.2” 1-2, 4).

The seventh poem of El reposo also alludes to the political and social ramifications present in the subject’s relationship with the outside world. The external force, previously personified as a type of thirst (“la incendiaria sed”), is now addressed as an all-powerful dictator, suggesting both empire and creation:

El dictador, el todopoderoso,
el que construye los desiertos mira
cómo nacen del cuerpo los bestiales
ácidos de la muerte... (“I.7” 1-4)

Furthermore, the ambiguous reference to “bestiales” suggests that all things, human, animal, organic and inorganic, are equally carriers of this “beastlike” force. However, even though we may see increasingly ideological implications in the terminology of these poems, images of death (“muerte”) and birth (“nacen”) continue to mitigate the stridency of his commentary by presenting the paradoxical aspects of this underlying force.

The physical elements inhabiting Los elementos, which Hoeksema has described as the “elements of imaginative experience” (3), are more literally connected to the physical laws that guide the universe in El reposo. Recalling the ancient topos popularized by the Greek thinker, Empedocles, who identified the planet’s essential elements as water, air, earth and fire (Millerd 28), these poems suggest a type of self-maintaining, homeostatic system. In other words, Pacheco links the primary elements of the earth (land, fire, wind and water) to its destructive capacities, but he paradoxically uses terminology of construction and birth in ways that demonstrate how the opposing forces of construction/destruction allow for a certain type of equilibrium in the universe.

Consequently, Pacheco demonstrates that both life and death are equally necessary for the perpetuation of the universe.

Oviedo views French philosopher Gaston Bachelard as a contemporary link between Pacheco's poetry and Empedocles ("José Emilio Pacheco" 46-48). Bachelard applied Empedocles' four elements not as actual physical elements of nature, but as elements of imaginative experience (Frye), an experience that allowed the poet to reengage with its primitive archetypes of nature. As opposed to a strict, empirical understanding of the outside world common to scientific discourse, Pacheco is following Bachelard by presenting the highly impressionistic and subjective effect that the outside world can have on the human mind. For Pacheco, the imaginative emphasis on these four elements increasingly becomes a vehicle for people to reengage with the outside world from which he has become almost irreparably divided.

Moreover, whether we accept the cosmic elements of these poems as imaginative entities or as entities of real physical existence, we can see how the relationship of the human individual to the four primal elements becomes increasingly tied to an ideological position that critiques contemporary society's egoistic exaltation of the accomplishments of humanity. Recalling the Biblical allusion to ashes and dust, the latter becomes the primal entity to which fire returns all things and an empirical reminder of the terminal nature of all matter: "El polvo es tiempo" ("I.10" 16).²⁷

²⁷ I am referring to scriptures in both Genesis and Job. In Genesis 18.27, Abraham regards life humbly: "I who am but dust and ashes" (Harper Collins Study Bible 28). Similarly, in 30.19 Job observes, "I have become like dust and ashes" (782), and in 42.6, he addresses God: "I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes" (795). Christian tradition has used the term to express the need for repentance before God and death ("ashes to ashes, dust to dust"). The Biblical motif, as used in *El reposo*, implicitly suggests the commonality of our mortal existence as a foundation for a more harmonious existence with other humans, plants, animals and inorganic matter.

Even mountains, which stand out for their defiant resistance to the corrosive effects of time, ultimately return to their dusty origin. It is clear that Pacheco is challenging conceptions of humans as masters of their environment and makers of their own destiny as he directs his commentary on the transience of all things to specifically target human beings. For example, the poetic speaker states that people, like mountains and other earthly components, are only raw matter which fight to resist the corrosive effects of time: “[l]os seres, son de polvo también [como las montañas], se tornan viento” (“I.10” 9-11).

In spite of the increased social tenor of these poems through his use of words and phrases like “dictador,” “masedumbre,” and “manchas viscosas del aire tóxico,” much of the poetic language remains hermetic. Furthermore, the text’s personification of the universe’s natural forces, present throughout Pacheco’s first two volumes of poetry, continue to represent the underlying force as an insatiable type of desire, “la cortante voracidad con que extiende el deterioro” (“I.3” 3), that is ultimately connected to death and destruction: “fosa insaciable en donde humea / anticipada lucha su esqueleto” (“I.7” 7-8). The recurring allusions to the earth as the ultimate end of human destiny not only recall the Biblical passage of “ashes to ashes,” but also the literary topos, *memento mori* (“Remember that you die”). Therefore, in this passage, we may discern how the “fosa insaciable” (7-8) serves as a somber reminder to the reader of our mortal existence, but the passage also reminds the reader of the common destiny that people share with all the other organic and inorganic inhabitants of the earth.

Although death is the common denominator that connects people to all of the other elements of the world, we should not forget that the poetic representation of death also

provides creative possibilities: “Aquí te expandes, vida mortal” (“I.11” 1). In the final poem of El reposo’s first section, the creative/destructive paradox offers the poet literary space from which to propose an alternative to the inalterable disaster which he finds in human existence. The poet beckons the reader: “Prende fuego al desastre. / Y otra hoguera / florezca” (“I.15” 3-5). Once again, the disaster, addressed throughout both Los elementos and El reposo, refers to human life as a solitary existence where people are inescapably part of a violent governing order that is necessary for the earth’s perpetuation. When read in the context of the other poems of El reposo and Los elementos with their strong emphasis on paradox, “I.15” promotes a new poetic language that evokes the creative/destructive dualism. Knowing our common end in death, then, also means knowing our common contribution to future life.

While poems like “I.15” posit the use of paradox as a way of liberating the individual from the alienating effect of our symbolic lives, the ideology inherent in Pacheco’s early poems cannot be fully understood without clearly ascertaining his adoption of Heraclitian ideas, and more specifically, Heraclitus’ concept of the *logos*. Early in the volume’s second section, the poet, for the first time, explicitly connects the paradoxical order driving his poetic world to Heraclitus in a poem aptly titled, “II.2: Don de Heráclito:

El reposo del fuego es tomar forma
con su pleno poder de transformarse...

Fuego es el mundo que se extingue y cambia
para durar (fue siempre) eternamente. (6-7, 10-11)

What strikes the reader about this passage is not only the appearance of the book’s title, “el reposo del fuego,” within the line, but also Pacheco’s particular play with the Heraclitian concept of paradox. Lewis Rubman has pointed out the paradoxical contrast

between the noun, “forma,” and the verb, “transformarse,” as well as the opposition between “cambiar” and “siempre.” Rubman intuitively asks and concludes: “But doesn’t identity of form and rest destroy the Heraclitian paradox of endless pattern of ceaseless change. Not at all. The fire’s rest is to take form” (436). In spite of Rubman’s lucid commentary, there remain questions regarding this external order that structures Pacheco’s poetic world. How does Pacheco maintain affinities with postmodern literature, which disavows notions of an underlying order to the universe, while positing a force akin to the *logos*? Does Pacheco believe that this order can be understood through language? Therefore, to ascertain the ideological program at work in El reposo, we must endeavor to find what “form” means for Pacheco.

In Mexico’s poetic tradition, the Heraclitian notions of form and substance are most clearly connected to José Gorostiza’s classic poem, Muerte sin fin (1939). In this poem, Gorostiza uses the two metaphors of glass and water to symbolize concepts of a transparent intelligence, like glass, that contains a substance, like water, which lacks form (Xirau 63). The water wishes to be the glass and even deceives itself into thinking that it has become this transparent shell. In an article on Muerte sin fin, Pacheco observes in Gorostiza’s poem that the “duality of water and vessel represents not only poetry and the form in which it is embodied but also life and the individual in which it is made concrete” (“José Gorostiza,” Latin American 928). What is interesting about Pacheco’s comment is that he sees in Gorostiza’s metaphor the extension of Heraclitus’s notion of the *logos*, not only with respect to poetry and language, but also to the human individual. If we can apply these observations by Pacheco to his own poetry, we see that the dual nature of form and substance can be interpreted on three levels: 1) the material entities making up

the cosmos, 2) the human body and 3) language, or poetry. In addition, for Pacheco, form, springing from the *logos*, is intrinsically bound up with destruction and creation. It follows that violence and creation become inevitably caught up not only with the way people interact, but also with the way that they verbally relate to one another through language.

Pacheco's reading of Gorostiza's concepts of water (substance) and form (vessel) is pertinent to my analysis since Pacheco's own adaptation of Heraclitian concepts also destabilizes notions of a centered subject who deceives himself in his own sense of self-mastery. Furthermore, since Pacheco has previously shown how language is complicit in the way people understand and react to their surrounding environment, language becomes the main point of attack in the poet's deconstructive work. For example, Pacheco's adaptation of Heraclitus' concept of the *logos* takes on linguistic as well as cosmic implications. In the second section's twelfth poem, Pacheco co-opts Heraclitus to show how communication is derived from a precarious web of signifiers:

Tu reino es la ciudad de agua y aceite
que flotan sin unirse. Su equilibrio
es su feroz tensión. ("I.12" 4-6)

In this poem, we see how incompatible liquids like "agua and aceite" ("I.12 4") establish meaning ("tu reino") through their own field of inner tension. Consequently, when read from a linguistic perspective, the poem contests the rigid relationship between signifier and referent in classical Saussurian thought, asserting that meaning is established through the constant interaction of signifiers. In Course in General Linguistics, Swiss structuralist, Ferdinand de Saussure showed the relationship between signifier and signified in a fixed manner, as if existing on two sides of a piece of paper (113). For

example, Saussure uses the example of a tree to show how the signifier (written form or sound), “tree,” is inextricably connected to the notion or concept of tree (66-70).

Although he demonstrates the signifier’s relationship as arbitrary -- that is, the signifier corresponding to the concept of tree varies from language to language and is content based -- he understands the relationship between the signifier and signified in more relatively fixed terms than Lacan. Lacan has challenged this fixed relationship by showing how meaning is produced based on the signifier’s own relationship to other signifying chains.

Like Lacan, Pacheco’s poems purports that signifiers have no individual, semantic value of their own, but their ability to signify is determined wholly by their relationship to other signifiers.²⁸ When we recall Rubman’s observation that “fire’s rest is to take form” (436), “form,” or meaning, becomes derived from the cumulative force of each of its individual, signifying units rather than a preexisting or underlying structure. Form is not *a priori* in that it doesn’t precede the material existence of signification.

In addition to presenting linguistic signification as a dynamic process resulting from a constantly changing state of tension, Pacheco uses this analogy to progressively hint at his growing preoccupation with the history of his homeland. His references to “agua,” “aceite,” and “ciudad” clearly suggest that the poet is also extending his commentary to include the ancient Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán, now known as Mexico City. Initially founded by the ancient Aztecs as a city built on an island surrounded by Lake Texcoco. Mexico City was noted for its intricate system of canals which helped sustain the massive Aztec population and provided them with a protective border. After the conquest, the

²⁸ Dylan Evans sees in Lacan’s symbolic dimension that of the signifier: “a dimension in which elements have no positive existence but which are constituted by virtue of their mutual differences (202).

lake was drained by the Spanish (and again by the Mexican) government. Oil, Mexico's primary export, has served as a major source of wealth for the country as well as a source of corruption (Riding 112-33) and mismanagement (Zaid 73-83). So together, both oil and water have become mythic contributors to the country's wealth, as well as to its own demise.

On each of the multiple levels (cosmic, human and linguistic) with which we may interpret the violent aspects of the *logos*, we can discern the political implications apparent in El reposo. For example, on a cosmic level in the passage, "su combate se disfrazaba de paz y tregua alerta" ("I.12" 6-7), the alignment of the stars and planets results from an equilibrium based on the oppositional forces of attraction and repulsion of the interplanetary elements. On a human level, political conditions of peace or *détente* disguise underlying tensions or designs that each individual country has with respect to another. Similarly, on a linguistic level that recalls Lacan's *points de capiton*, communication becomes the momentary settlement of meaning, a cumulative counterbalance formed by the web of oppositional signifiers. On each level, the *logos* exists as the structure of order that is produced from the underlying strife or tension of its individual elements.

Therefore, each component of the *logos* is imperfect in as much as it is divided from a collective whole. Thus, the poetic speaker's observation: "Mala vasija, el cuerpo. Recipiente / de eterna insaciedad y deterioro" ("I.11" 1-2) should be interpreted equally on cosmic, human and linguistic levels. Like the human body and the cosmic elements of the earth, the linguistic signifier is a receptacle filled with energies that function like desire ("eterna insaciedad"). The poem's qualification of language as "mala" should be

understood as meaning that the signifier functions only as a receptacle of an outside energy that is produced from the signifier's relationship to other signifiers. Echoing Pacheco's previous comment on Gorostiza's poem, the part wants to be the whole, yet owes its existence to its adversarial relationship with the other elements. Therefore, language may also be considered "mala" in the way that the signifier deceives the individual into believing in its own state of completeness and perfection.

The line further suggests that the signifier (or, symbolically, the human body, or the earth's matter) is "mala" because it is subject to deterioration. Like the physical elements of the world (mountains, humans, etc.), language is also subject to corruption by the lapse of time. As language is nothing more than a mere snapshot of an underlying web of signifiers, it fails to accurately mirror the outside world. Meaning is unstable. The sentence or phrase becomes obsolete the moment it is voiced by its supporting web of constantly changing signifiers.

El reposo does not represent "form" as an underlying structure. Instead, the text shows form, or meaning, as the cumulative effect of a network of signifiers. However, in spite of the text's implicit rejection of logocentrism, El reposo does express, somewhat paradoxically, certain truths concerning what language can reveal about the outside world. For example, the poems do assert as an absolute truth the presence of an unrelenting force that acts upon both the physical elements of the universe and the signifying elements of our unconscious. They also assert that people are placed in a type of fundamental condition of alienation from one another that is closely related to our acquisition of language. Furthermore, these fundamental relationships can have

significant consequences in the way people react with one another and in the way they react toward the rest of the world.

Consequently, El reposo at times implies that the *logos* can reveal itself in linguistic terms on a fundamental level. For example, poem “II.8” expresses the consequences of the elusive, underlying force of the universe, or the *logos*, in reductionist terms using an asyndeton: “Sangre y odio, la historia” (9). In other words, we can see in this poem how the underlying force most adequately manifests itself in historical and linguistic terms in what can be considered “odio” (the adversarial relationship between constituent elements in the form of matter, humans, signifiers, etc.) and “sangre” (the spilling of blood, which is the physical and historical consequence of this adversarial relationship).

Therefore, El reposo’s passage, “Sangre y odio, la historia” (“I.8”) must be understood as the ultimate and inescapable destiny of all history, in spite of human efforts by historians, philosophers, politicians, etc. to understand our past as a way to avoid future human conflict and struggle. Implicit in this commentary is a critique of institutions and political systems (communism, capitalism, democracy, etc.) that propose utopian ideals of equity and fairness, while ignoring the ubiquity of an exterior force that leads to violence and confrontation.

Although Pacheco has previously hinted at a new poetic expression that escapes the violent manifestations of the *logos*, he also forecloses any possibility of a comprehensive, revolutionary poetics by repeatedly emphasizing the inherent fallibility of language. Throughout Los elementos and El reposo, the poetic speaker’s attempt to reconcile with the illusive other are met with failure, only reinforcing the poet’s feeling of separation from the outside world. Reminiscent of Lacan, words become the substitute for our sense

of loss, which can never quite say what we want them to say (i.e. to reveal the initial trauma of separation that propels the individual into symbolic experience). They become the surplus, the redundancy, which makes up and reinforces our solitary existence: “Es retórica retórica hasta el llanto” (“III.7” 10-11). Similarly, another poem shows words as if they were randomly generated and drastically altered from their originating source: “Palabras, carcomidas, rengueantes, sonsonete / de algún viejo molino” (“III.10” 9-11).

Even though I have demonstrated how Pacheco foregrounds the power relations inherent in language, another of the distinguishing features of El reposo is the complicity of our optic senses with language in framing our thought systems. Early in the first section of the book, the poetic speaker alludes to the limited capability with which he sees and understands the surrounding world: “Miro sin comprender” (“I.4” 1). From this point in El reposo onwards, the gaze of the poetic speaker seeks a new way to see the world. The speaker, who is “sin nombre” (3), looks for “un rastro fugaz ... un vestigio” (“I.8” 4). Pacheco destabilizes tendencies of seeing the material world in a static manner by revealing the changing forms which make up our reality: “Fuego del aire y soledad del fuego / al incendiar el aire hecho de fuego” (“II.2” 8-9). Similarly, other passages also emphasize the changing states of matter: “la lluvia intemporal, forma del aire, / el agua que renace de sí misma” (“I.5” 4-5).

If our visual senses are complicit with language in distorting the way we understand the material world, then the ethical values that we generally maintain as good or bad also become relativized. Concepts of moral relativity, which were apparent in Los elementos, are more clearly advanced in El reposo in ways that explicitly critique human presumptions to knowledge. For example, in a passage that recalls Gorostiza’s metaphor

of the glass as the formal structure of an underlying order, the poet states in rather direct language: “Nuestra moral, sus dogmas y certezas / se ahogaron en un vaso” (“II.9” 1-2). The colloquial Spanish phrase, roughly translated in English as “to make mountains out of molehills,” derides the false sense of comfort that society and its individuals have in devising their own moral codes as if these codes were absolute standards of conduct. In their derision, Pacheco’s words confirm the ideas of postmodern thinker, Lyotard, who advocated the postmodern as an “incredulity toward metanarratives” (xxiv) that rejects totalizing, large scale philosophies. Pacheco seems to echo Lyotard by pointing out ironically the failures of dogma and certainties, generally formulated by Western modes of thought, to provide a sustainable way of life for the world at large, including the West and Latin America. Once again, a position of moral relativism reveals itself in a more direct, unambiguous manner: “Sólo perder ganamos existiendo” (“I.11” 3). From my perspective, these lines represent a view of moral relativism by ironically questioning the moral goodness or worthiness of human existence. Therefore, by representing life paradoxically as a victory, “ganamos” (3), and as a loss, “perder” (3), the poet implies the different subjective viewpoints from which we can evaluate human existence. In addition, he offers yet another paradox by suggesting that victory and loss, like creation and destruction, may be equally necessary for the continued evolution of the universe.

Accordingly, El reposo increasingly examines the philosophical implications that our optic senses play in shaping the way human beings engage with the outside world. The poet underscores the role of our visual abilities in asking if we can understand the world beyond our own limited perspectives: “¿Qué ojos verán el mundo si la órbita donde la luz brilló sólo es la casa de las hormigas, su castillo impune?” (“I.11” 4-6). By allowing the

ant world to double for human life or to imply decayed eyes, the poet critiques human arrogance in establishing individual ideologies and epistemologies, which share in common their claim to “know” the world. Consistent with Pacheco’s generous use of symbolic connections throughout these first two books (i.e. on cosmic, human and linguistic levels), we see that “casa” may not only represent literally the castles we have built on earth as a testimony to our human accomplishments, but also figuratively to represent the verbal constructions we use to frame the world which we seek to comprehend.

The text’s allusions to the ant world, noted for their collective commitment toward serving the queen, in as much as the queen is the necessary guarantor of the ant colony’s survival as a whole, help advance Pacheco’s critique of anthropocentric notions of “seeing” the world more clearly than the other inhabitants of the planet. Consequently, the ants’ dedication to the queen stands in contrast to the individualism associated with human life forms, particularly in Western culture. Therefore, while pointing out that we all see and understand the outside world from our biased perspectives, our “castillo impune” (6), the poem also subtly and ironically suggests ant systems of behavior as a model for human life.

Lacan’s understanding of the gaze helps to explain the complicitous relationship between vision and language apparent in many of the poems in El reposo. For Lacan, the gaze is what leads the subject to symbolize her or his own subjective unity in the illusion of consciousness (Four Fundamental 83). Like the perspectivism increasingly revealed in Pacheco’s poems, Lacan understands the relationship between the subject’s search for the object’s gaze as antinomic; “You never look at me from the place at which I see you”

(Four Fundamental 103).²⁹ Similar to Pacheco's poems, the optic senses become implicated with language in deluding the subject into accepting the completeness of her or his own understanding of both the self and the outside world.

Even though the eyes conspire with language in revealing the distorted images of the physical world to the individual, Pacheco looks for a creative alternative by proposing a new way to comprehend our relationship with "reality." He suggests that the poet look away from the deceiving outer world and look inside to one's inner self:

No alzar los ojos.
Ver el muro ileso.
Disipar las tinieblas
 Acercarse
Al fondo de esta noche... (II.3" 1-5)

Interestingly, the wall, the "muro ileso" (2), recalls the wall of the night ("Árbol de dos muros"), featured so conspicuously in the opening poem of Los elementos. We should remember in poems like "Árbol entre dos muros" that "night" most clearly reflected notions of emptiness, the inaccessible Other, and death. In this poem of El reposo, Pacheco's emphatic indentation of the fourth line gives special emphasis to the difficulty, and perhaps the need to break with conventional patterns of "seeing," to begin to "see" a new existence, paradoxically, by moving closer ("acercarse") to one's own death represented as the "fondo de esta noche." In other words, the poem advocates a new consciousness that manifests itself when one considers his or her own mortality. The

²⁹ Dylan Evans points out that the early Lacanian concept of the gaze is generally consistent with Sartre, but Lacan becomes increasingly interested in the gaze of the Other that is the object of the subject's drive (72). Evans makes the following distinction between the two thinkers: "Whereas Sartre had conceived of an essential reciprocity between seeing the Other and being-seen-by-him, Lacan now [from 1964 onward] conceives of an antinomic relation between the gaze and the eye: the eye which looks is that of the subject, while the gaze is on the side of the object, the object is always already gazing back at the subject, but from a point at which the subject cannot see" (72).

theme of *memento mori* addressed so prominently in El reposo's first section, returns as the key starting point for people to see themselves and the rest of the world.

In the second section's fourth poem, one of the most enigmatic lines of El reposo shows how our gaze may approximate the order of the *logos*, which is represented in the following line as light: "Si se extiende la luz / toma la forma / de lo que está inventando la mirada" ("II.4" 1-3). One cannot help but notice the conspicuous presence of the word, "forma," which recalls the book's pivotal poem, "II.2: Don de Heráclito." Is the *logos*, then, just an invention of the gaze? Not necessarily. The *logos* as an ontological category remains irreducible to human attempts to comprehend it as a knowable object. However, if the "mirada" (3) is interpreted as a continuation of the previous poem, that is "No alzar los ojos. / Ver el muro ileso" ("II.3" 1-2), one can "invent" oneself from a common position that is shared with the other entities of the universe: our finite existence. Instead of falling into the logocentric position of acknowledging an underlying order that can be revealed or understood by people, Pacheco opts to show how a mythic sense of collective wholeness can be invented by "seeing" our own death imaginatively.

The second section's tenth poem confirms that recognizing our own mortality is the proper position from which we must "see" the world. In this poem, the speaker observes that at mid afternoon, when the sun reaches its zenith, there is a still point of time and movement, a type of "reposo del fuego," when the temporal flow and spatial movement momentarily cease. The human subject, who previously directed his gaze toward the other ("Miro sin comprender"), now becomes the object of the other's gaze. Instead of "seeing" his own truth, the subject is co-opted into the outer world and, for a brief moment, also becomes an "inmóvil objeto" (7). Conspicuously, there is no power

relation in this magic moment as the objects “no permiten / luchar porque no avancen ni se adueñen / de nuestro mundo” (4-6):

A la mitad de la tarde los objetos
.....
nos miran
fijamente, no permiten
luchar porque no avancen ni se adueñen
de nuestro mundo al fin
y nos convierten en inmóvil objeto. (“II.10” 1, 3-7)

In the initial lines of the next poem, the speaker repeats the one truth, the one maxim that won’t change, which is, paradoxically, that all things will change and ultimately die out: “Todo lo empaña el tiempo y da al olvido” (“II.11” 1). Time, which is infinite in that it never ceases, is sovereign over the earth’s physical elements, which are finite. Furthermore, the passage, with its emphasis on “olvido,” reflects the topos, *ubi sunt*, by expressing how time ultimately survives all experiences and all finite things, relegating the people and things humans know to an irretrievable and forgotten past.

Consequently, time’s force is so relentless that the eyes appear to “see” and be unable to bear the order of time in all of its ferocity: “Los ojos no resisten / tanta ferocidad” (“II.11” 2-3). This order, again recalling the totality of the *logos*, which evades human comprehension, becomes personified as the second person possessive pronoun, “tus” (7) in ways that suggest a more personal relationship between the poetic subject and incessant march of time. Also, the subject expresses a type of empathetic connection with the “tú,” exemplified as “tus ojos tristísimos,” but there also exists a sense of separation in that the subject and the “tú” can never see from the same perspective: “Ojos tuyos tristísimos: han visto / lo que nunca miré” (II.11 8-9). He closes the poem employing a “gradación” that is reminiscent of a famous poem by 17th century baroque, Mexican poet,

Sor Juana: “Todo es olvido, sombra, desenlace” (11), even though the *logos* for Sor Juana is God, and there is a transcendent heaven after death.³⁰

In addition to positing the passage of time and the mortal essence of all material things as the one objectifiable truth, the first two sections of El reposo offer us a new form of language that allows a greater freedom of expression through multiple, even paradoxical meanings. Therefore, the new poetics encourages contradiction as a function of signification: “Soy y no soy aquél que te ha esperado” (“II.2” 14) and “Las cosas hoy se reúnen / y las que están más próximas se alejan” (“II.2” 12-13). Words are also produced outside the constraints of fixed, linear or cyclical time:

No estabas, no estarás,
pero el oleaje
de una espuma remota confluía
sobre mis actos y entre mis palabras. (“II.2” 22-25)

Moreover, by connecting the poetic moment to a state of consciousness that allows for paradoxical thought, the poem suggests an alternative form of discourse that reconnects the individual mythically to the outside world. Thus, the sensation of unification, created by paradox, counters traditional forms of linear and rational discourse that reinforce the subject’s division from the other.

The use of poetic forms of communication as a means of momentarily “conquering” our divided subjectivity closely follows Lacanian thought. While Lacan critiqued language systems, particularly those discourses such as science that allow humans to forget our divided subjectivity, he praised poetic ways of speaking that allowed for irrational or contradictory forms of thought. In his article, “The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious,” Lacan relates poetic expression through the use of metaphor to an

³⁰ Sor Juana’s famous sonnet, “A su retrato,” ends: “es cadáver, es polvo, es sombra, es nada” (14).

interstitial, liminal space of communication: “We see, then that, metaphor occurs at the precise point at which sense emerges from non-sense” (Ecrits 158). Consequently, the poetry of Los elementos and El reposo, which often juxtaposes words and phrases with paradoxical meanings, creates a liminal language that uses irrational modes of expression in ways that temporarily defeat the divided condition of human beings, allowing them to experience a sense of wholeness. Therefore, poetry converts itself into a social tool that can alleviate the deeper forms of alienation experienced by humanity.

Throughout the first two sections of El reposo, Pacheco has posited a world view that refutes traditional notions of good or bad by foregrounding the discursive construction of our belief systems. In addition, the poems of El reposo counter traditional forms of discourse that assert univocal ways of seeing the world. In its place, as we have shown, Pacheco offers a type of poetry that uses paradox and contradiction as a way of mythically reuniting humans with the outside world. Although the poet portrays the human subject as inevitably divided from the other, he finds common ground in the mortal existence of all things. Therefore, the common basis of death becomes the “muerte como una fuerza creadora” (Olivera Williams 134-44) that he will use to establish a poetry that celebrates our collective experience over individual distinctions.

Even though the first two sections of El reposo advance an implicit ideological program based on paradox and ethical relativity (e.g. “Sólo perder ganamos existiendo,” “I.10,” “nos iremos sin hacer nada,” “II.8”), topical references to contemporary events or figures remain almost completely absent. Although we can discern a more direct political critique in his allusions to the air as “manchas tóxicas del aire” (“I.2” 5) and his characterization of the *logos* as “el dictador, el todopoderoso” (“I.7” 1-2), it remains

difficult to determine how his emerging ideology would be applied and understood in the context of modern society. However, the third and final section of El reposo gives historical application to the ideological positions now making themselves more fully evident in Pacheco's poetry. In "III.1," the toxic elements, hinted at in the volume's earlier poem, are now represented in the context of modern Mexico: "Bajo el suelo de México se pudren / todavía las aguas del diluvio" (3-4).

The growing political tenor in Pacheco's poetry of the sixties closely follows a nascent Mexican preoccupation with the democratic and social failures of Mexico's political system, which had been dominated by the PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional) since 1929. Although Mexico was enjoying remarkable growth under the administration of Gustavo Díaz Ordaz from 1964-70 (Zaid 33), the emerging environmental problems resulting from this rapid development, as well as the government's own failures to address these problems and other issues (e.g. ongoing poverty, crime, juvenile delinquency, cronyism, etc.) led to an increasing disenchantment with the ideals of Mexico's Revolutionary Party. The PRI-led government was progressively being viewed as a swollen, ineffective and corrupt bureaucracy, which Mexican writer Gabriel Zaid has referred to as Mexico's problem of "gigantismo" (9). Critic Adriana García has noticed the spillover effect of these concerns in the generation of Mexican poets that included Pacheco. García writes: "The most recent generation of poets [the poets of the sixties including Pacheco] is molded by the urban center of Mexico City. An increasing pollution problem, a stagnant governmental bureaucracy, ... and insufficient housing and public services for the masses have brought about a renewed interest in cultivating poetry of a sociopolitical nature" (202). Pacheco conforms to his

generation's anxiety over Mexico's rapidly escalating environmental and social problems in noting: "La ciudad en estos años cambió tanto / que ya no es mi ciudad" ("III.3" 1-2).

Previous references in the poem to Mexico's Aztec heritage connect the gaze to Moctezuma (III.1" 34) and Cuauhtémoc ("III.1" 44), the Aztec emperors, who died in defense of their city against the aggressions of Spanish troops headed by Hernán Cortés. Critics have pointed out that the city is a recurring motif in Pacheco's works. Juan Armando Epple points out that the city is a site of both physical and mental destruction in many of his poetic works, and it serves as a vehicle to allow the author and reader to reconfigure an understanding of the city through "una nueva ética" (33). Like Epple, Alicia Borinsky observes Pacheco's symbolic use of the city as the realm of subjective perceptions that forms the way people see themselves and the outside world as we may find in Pacheco's book Ciudad de la memoria (1990). Borinsky says that Pacheco does not propose rupture through his representation of destruction, but he proposes "una continuidad basada en la pérdida, el desastre, re-encontrada como escombros, fragmento" (176). In the following passage, Mexico's past is personified. Because of its tragic history, it angrily gazes at the contemporary state of Mexico City, shown as "nos" (18):

Ojos, ojos
cuántos ojos de cólera mirándonos
en la noche de México, en la furia
animal, devorante de la hoguera. ("III.5" 17-20)

In the first two sections of El reposo, the position of the gaze changed from that of the poetic speaker ("Miro sin comprender"), to that of an underlying power, or energy reminiscent of the *logos* ("El dictador, el todopoderoso, / el que construye los desiertos mira..."), to the other objects of the outside world ("los objetos...nos miran"), but in the third section, the gaze is directed to Mexico's historic and mythic past. In each of these

passages, the look is expressed in a way that seeks to control or force interaction with the elements that surround it. For example, after Pacheco's poignant critique of Spain's brutal conquest of Aztec lands, the poet observes: "Lo visible / arde y el ojo en llamas lo [el mundo] interroga." ("III.14" 2-3). In this passage, the eye in the flames not only recalls the myth of *el quinto sol*, but the flame also connotes the destructive capacity with which this elusive force interacts with the rest of the world.

Therefore, throughout El reposo, an outside force, akin to the *logos*, exerts an omnipresent force that manifests itself on a cosmic and linguistic scale as well as through the gaze. We may also recall how the speaker represented this all encompassing force as the "dictador, el todopoderoso" ("I.7" 1) in the volume's first section. In the third section, the *logos* now manifests itself in the form of the Spanish viceroy who enslaved the Aztec people, filling in the diverse network of lakes that surrounded and sustained their capital city, Tenochtitlán, now Mexico City: "El poderoso / virrey, emperador, sátrapa hizo / de los lagos y bosques el desierto" ("III.7 1-3). Notably, the *logos*, operating through the decrees of the Spanish viceroy, the new "emperador," is presented as a violent incursion and enslavement of the indigenous people of Mexico. The historical allusion to the Spanish viceroy remains enigmatic but could refer to the first viceroy in Mexico, Antonio Hurtado de Mendoza, who served from 1535 until 1550, and was encharged with significant authorial powers by the monarchy to put down insurrections from Native Americans, who were living in what was then known as Nueva España. Under his rule, he served as intermediary between the Spanish colonial landowners and the reformer, Bartolomé de las Casas. Although some historians suggest that he was sympathetic to the indigenous people, he failed to enforce the reforms that

resulted from de las Casas' efforts (Meyer, Sherman and Deeds 141-42). Pacheco links the violence of the Conquest directly to the viceroy's use of language as his decrees are orchestrated through speech:

Dijo el virrey: *Los hombres de esta tierra
son seres para siempre condenados
a eterna oscuridad y abatimiento.
Para callar y obedecer nacieron.* ("III.6" 22-25)

While previously discussed poems like "Crecimiento del día" (Los elementos) have shown linguistic communication as a violent appropriation of an otherwise infinite and constantly changing meaning, "III.6" demonstrates how the violence of the *logos* operates through people in their transgressions against other individuals. The passionate critique of the poem clearly demonstrates the ideological position of the author. He is decisively anti-Conquest in his denunciation of the Spanish intrusion into native American lands. He presents this commentary in its stark brutality, which is clearly directed at the Spanish conquistadors. In addition, the human community (the indigenous people of Mexico) is not the only victim of the Spanish Conquest. Pacheco extends his commentary to show the natural environment of Tenochtitlán as an innocent victim as well:

¿Qué se hicieron
tantos jardines, las embarcaciones
y los bosques, las flores y los prados?
Los mataron
Para alzar su palacio los ladrones.
¿Qué se hicieron los lagos, los canales
De la ciudad, sus ondas y rumores?
Los llenaron de mierda, los cubrieron
Para abrir paso a todos los carruajes
De los eternos amos de esta tierra... ("III.6" 9-18)

The predominant literary topos in this passage is *ubi sunt*. The poem's speaker laments the disappearance of the extraordinary beauty of the Aztec empire. Although by using the third person subject, "ellos," he does not specifically identify the guilty parties that destroyed the Aztec lands, it is clear from the other passages in this third section that Pacheco's criticism is directed toward the Spanish colonizers and leaders, who initially drained Lake Texcoco, turning the once fertile lands into arid, desert like conditions of modern day Mexico City.

In an article on Mexican poetry of the twentieth century, Pacheco noted defects in the poetry of Efrain Huerta for allowing his ideology to override his talent ("Aproximación a la poesía mexicana del siglo XX" 213). Since Pacheco, in his critique of the Spanish Conquest of Mexico, has also begun to allow his ideology to take a more central focus in El reposo, we must ask to what degree Pacheco considers politically motivated poetry to be acceptable in his own poems. In the same article, Pacheco takes particular interest in the rise of a special group of social poets, who had published at the time of his essay one collective volume of poems, entitled La espiga amotinada (1960). While acknowledging the great promise that this group holds in leading the new generation of poetry, Pacheco condones their poetic expressions of social protest, which he sees as a current "tendencia que en sí no es censurable y que los acontecimientos de nuestro tiempo hace poco menos que necesaria" (218). However, he recalls his criticism of Huerta by citing as a defect their neglect of a guiding rule of form, "un matiz que las [sus palabras] regule" (218). For Pacheco, expressions of social critique must be subordinated to some guiding standard. In the poems of Pacheco, we can conclude that this guiding standard has been

the paradoxical effect of the *logos*, including its traditional application to the cosmic world, but also its symbolic application to the field of linguistics with a Lacanian twist.

The poems of El reposo are confronting the philosophical crossroads where his new poetics, steeped in moral relativism and presented in a language that permits paradox, meets the call to social commentary faced by a growing number of poets and artists of the sixties, who were becoming increasingly disenchanted with the Mexican political.

Although Pacheco's critique is centered at the Spanish Conquest, which occurred in the sixteenth century, his willingness to criticize the Conquest does point toward an increased desire to engage in social dialogue by implicitly connecting Mexico's current struggles to its brutal past. However, restrained by his awareness that his critique is another imposition of an imperfect knowledge system among other competing epistemologies, Pacheco does both. Right after making his sharp attack on the brutality of the Spanish Conquest, Pacheco returns to a position of moral relativity. The poet observes: "Ningún tiempo pasado ciertamente fue peor ni fue mejor" ("III.6" 27-28).

Just a few poems later, the speaker restates more explicitly the dilemma he is encountering in finding a language free from ideological oppression, one that is capable of commenting on the horror of the times:

Hay que darse valor para hacer esto:
escribir cuando rondan las paredes
uñas airadas, animales ciegos
No es posible callar, comer silencio,
y es por completo inútil hacer esto
antes que los gusanos del instante
abran la boca muda de la letra
y devoren su espíritu. ("III.10" 1-8)

When read in the context of the whole poem, the "gusanos del instante" (6), with its close association to writing ("letra" [7]), as well as the previous reference to "animales ciegos"

(3), the reader is led to believe that Pacheco's commentary states that failure to speak only allows the ideological chain of aggressions of the "opportunistic" other to continue. The "gusanos" refers to those opportunistic people who feed off of the dead carcass of the signifier, the "letra," for their own personal benefit. However, the poem's selection of the descriptor, "gusanos," also recalls our eventual decomposition to matter, echoing once again the topos of *memento mori*. Even though the poet ironically characterizes poetry as "por completo inútil" (5), he advocates that the poet take a position of protest against the opportunists. Therefore, the text has once again moved from a position of moral relativism, where violence and destruction are necessary for life's continuation, to a position of social critique, where the poetic speaker criticizes those who exploit the semantic openness of language for their own opportunistic advancement.

In fact, the passage reflects a key difference between Pacheco's ideological commentary and that of many North American and European postmodern writers, such as Lyotard, who regards all forms of ideological commentary as an attempt toward a master narrative. The speaker's tentative posturing toward ideological engagement has left the poet in the margins of an inter-human struggle, and his silence only allows the aggression to continue. The passage echoes his previously mentioned comment on social poetry where he states: "los acontecimientos de nuestro tiempo hace poco menos que necesaria" ("Aproximación" 218). Therefore, Pacheco does not regard his new poetic program of multi-perspectivism and moral relativity as an ideological breakthrough; he acknowledges that his position of moral relativization also carries with it enormous social consequences as well.

Although mindful that engagement in dialogue makes him complicitous in the ideological struggle for power, the speaker looks for a way to reenact the pervasive violence he sees all around him in a way that symbolically unites the individual in a positive manner with the other members of the universe. In the final poems of El reposo, the poet repeats the motif of the bonfire to express the type of poetry he has in mind. We should remember in the book's first poem, "I.1," the poet depicted the human individual in a state of isolation besieged on all sides by a burning "hoguera." The poem also represented the poet, or the poem, metapoetically as the "hoja" ("I.1" 7) that perilously blew about the bonfire. The poet, who has learned from the previous poems of El reposo that he is unable to eliminate violence on earth, decides in the third section that he may torch the bonfire, at least, poetically: "Arde la hoguera. / Fuego la luz. Ceniza" ("III.15" 15-16). The bonfire then functions as a type of cathartic vehicle that allows the poet to evoke the highest levels of emotion. However, when read metapoetically, the passage asks the poet to surrender his poetry to the destructive force of the universe as a way to give, paradoxically, a sudden burst of life to his words. By showing the final product of the poem as ash, Pacheco returns to the topos of *memento mori*, which has been repeated throughout El reposo, as the starting point from which to write. Ash also becomes what can unite all humanity in our common destiny, recalling the motif of the phoenix, and a promise of rebirth, if not for the human individual, then for the greater goal of the planet or universe.

By acknowledging death as part of a shared destiny, the poet can properly see the world to which he applies his poetics: "todo el jardín se yergue entre las piedras: / nace el mundo de nuevo ante mis ojos" ("III.12" 4-5). Although he is unable to find a universal

solution to address the violence besetting the human condition, El reposo at best finds a compromise in poetry's capacity to temporarily alleviate the inevitable sense of division suffered in our symbolic existence. The final poem of the El reposo also uses the reference to the bonfire and leaf to show how the poem is able to recreate the destructive/creative force of the universe that the poet has associated with the *logos*. Therefore, from this perspective, the poem is an "epitafio del fuego / cárcel" ("III.15" 11-12). In referring to the poem as an epitaph, the poet compares poetry to the other elements of the universe with a material presence. However, it also contains fire, which suggests the creative capacities of the *logos*. These creative features cannot be fully quantified or reducible to language. At best, its fiery essence is a sad reminder of both our mortal existence and a consolatory recognition of the predominance of hostile time ("tristísima hoguera"). Even so, by burning the old order, the poet maintains the promise of rebirth of new life forms, and perhaps new forms of poetry that will arise from its ashes.

With the end of El reposo, Pacheco's minimally surrealist exploration will become increasingly less evident in each of his subsequent books (Doudoroff 150). Although borrowing from the surrealist precedent set by Octavio Paz, Pacheco differs from his predecessor in the way that he emphasizes the role of language in mediating the inevitable confrontation between a human being's subjective consciousness and the outside world. By syncretising Heraclitian concepts of an underlying *logos* with Lacanian principles of subjectivity, the poet reveals to us an elementary ideology that foregrounds the moral relativity of our ideological systems. However, at the same time, he points out the sometimes devastating consequences of political inaction. Forced to

choose between passive acceptance of a morally relative world or an activist program of social critique, Pacheco allows for both. Thus, we observe developing in his poetry an ideology that permits limited social critique, but one which is always contextualized by the speaker's complicity in maintaining and perpetuating both the destructive and creative energies of an underlying *logos*. It will not be until Pacheco's following volume of poetry, No me preguntes cómo pasas el tiempo (1969), that we begin to see a broader application of the social and ethical consequences connected to the speaking and writing subject's use and appropriation of authoritative language.

CHAPTER III

AUTHORIAL CONTROL AND INTERTEXTUAL COLLABORATION

Pacheco's third book, No me preguntes cómo pasas el tiempo (1969), departs from the impersonal tone and hermetic style of Los elementos de la noche (1963) and El reposo del fuego (1966). Unlike his two previous efforts, the reader is confronted with a variety of voices ranging from the authoritative and socially conscious speaker of No me preguntes' early poems to a decentered speaker, who is masked by a myriad of epigraphs, heteronyms, translated authors and bestiaries in the book's final sections. These key stylistic changes should be seen as a continuation of the poet's search for a more harmonious form of communication between human beings and the other members of the universe. By gradually withdrawing the authoritative and centered subject of his early poems, Pacheco's ideology becomes grounded not only in his message of protest against economic, political and military domination, but also in his critique of the speaking subject itself.

When I speak of an "authoritative and centered speaker," I wish to say that the poet confidently imparts to the reader his own understanding of humanity's relationship with the outside world. Such confidence generally implies an uncomplicated notion of subjectivity and epistemology, as well as of the authorial role. For example, the title of No me preguntes' first section, "En estas circunstancias," indicates the poet's self-assurance about communicating accurately the problems and issues of contemporary

society. Similarly, the poetic speaker of “Un defensor de la prosperidad” assertively discloses to the reader how citizens unwittingly serve institutions of economic exploitation and military domination. My reference to this “personal speaker” of No me preguntes refers to the poet’s desire to share his own personal thoughts and observations in a straight-forward and open way with the reader. Pacheco signals the presence of this personal subject in the book’s title, “No me preguntes cómo pasas el tiempo,” by sardonically deriding his own previous obsessions with metaphysics and time. In addition, his informal recognition of the reader using the second person pronoun demonstrates his wish to include the reader in the writing experience as well.

Almost all critics have considered No me preguntes as a significant departure from both Los elementos and El reposo (Doudoroff 149-50). Pacheco’s citation of the Nicaraguan social poet and activist, Ernesto Cardenal, in No me preguntes’ opening epigraph, hints at the increased social and political involvement that is to appear in this volume of poetry. Furthermore, unlike the previous two volumes of poetry, which were divided into three sections of original poetry, No me preguntes is divided into six heterogeneous sections, ranging from socially engaged poems to metapoetry, bestiaries, translations, and poetry written under heteronyms.³¹

³¹ The original edition of Los elementos de la noche (1963) included three sections of original poems and a final section, entitled “Aproximaciones,” which consisted of his translated poems by John Donne, Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud and Salvatore Quasimodo. Upon reading Pacheco’s translations of these poets, one may find allusions, such as a repeating, romantic dialogue between the poet and an elusive “tú” that is associated with the night, which is similar to many of Pacheco’s own poems of Los elementos. Pacheco may be subtly inviting the reader to consider the sometimes subtle point of division that separates Pacheco’s words from the words of those he has translated. The original edition of El reposo del fuego (1966) was divided into three sections of Pacheco’s poems and did not include translations. However, in most of his remaining books of poetry, Pacheco has included his translations of other poets. In No me preguntes, Pacheco includes translations in the penultimate section of the book between his own authored poems and those written under two heteronyms. By including the translations between his own poems and those composed under heteronyms, Pacheco more forcefully invites the reader to consider notions of authorship and intertextual collaboration, which my second chapter analyzes.

As a result of the poet's newfound willingness to engage the reader in a more plain-spoken manner, the speaker of the book's first poem, "Descripción de un naufragio en ultramar," is both more centered and personal than the "invisible" poet of Los elementos and El reposo (Hoeksema 81). The poem reads like a prose poem in its use of standard syntax, but its decorous language retains some features of a more traditional, poetic voice. The poem's title recalls the motif of the lone, shipwrecked poet of "Éxodo" in Los elementos, who courageously struggles to restore meaning through poetry to a vacuous human existence. While the heroic poet-castaway of Los elementos remained anonymously represented in the third person, "el náufrago sin nombre" ("Éxodo," l. 5), in No me preguntes Pacheco employ a more personal tone by using the implied first person pronoun, "yo," to clearly connect the castaway figure to himself: "Piso una tierra firme" (No me preguntes, p. 11). By returning to land, we sense that the poet is signaling his desire to reconnect with his community (i.e. his readers, his countrymen, his critical community, etc.).

Although the poem recalls the ornate, prophetic language of Los elementos and El reposo, its tone is more satirical and self-deprecating. His prior ruminations on time/eternity, reality/dream-life and division/wholeness are now put on trial. He mocks the hermetic and metaphysical qualities of these poems as well as his previous reluctance to be engaged with the social issues of his people:

La tribu rió de mi lenguaje ornamentado, mi trato ceremonioso, la gesticulación
que ya no entienden. Los guerreros censuraron mi ineptitud para tensar el arco.
Y no pude sentarme entre el Consejo porque aún no tenía el cabello blanco ni el
tatuaje con que el tiempo celebra nuestro deterioro insaciable.

(No me preguntes 11)

The High Priest of the Council, possibly a furtive reference to preeminent Mexican poet, Octavio Paz, admonishes the poetic speaker for engaging in “vanas tretas para justificar tu [el aislamiento del poeta] aislamiento” (13). In many ways, the reference is biographical, alluding to the perceived socially indifferent qualities of Pacheco’s previous poetic works.³² The Priest directs the poet to rejoin his community and battle against a world that “se desploma ante mis ojos” (11). The speaker even hints at the necessity for militarization to defend against anonymous outside powers: “Desconfiaste de los señores de la guerra, los tiranos que arman los ejércitos en corso para garantizar a la metrópoli el suministro de lejanas especias” (12). The vocabulary remains cryptic, but the reference to the “Nuevo Mundo” (12) associates the “guerra” to the Spanish Conquest of the New World, and possibly the Conquest of Mexico.

Although he is reticent to identify specifically the forces of oppression, there is an urgency to his plea that contrasts with the morally ambiguous tone that populated much of Los elementos and El reposo. In addition, the poet speaks with a clear sense of purpose. He limits the range of acceptable responses to two possibilities. He may rejoin his community in fighting oppression at the risk of his life, “la cámara de gas” (13), a not so subtle reference to horrors of the Holocaust, or ally himself with the “enemigos de tu pueblo” (13) that enslave artist and human alike.

Much of the vocabulary used by Pacheco, such as references to “tribu” (11) and “Gran Sacerdote” (11) recall the cultural structure of primitive communities. However, the poet intermingles tribal terminology with allusions to modern society (for example, “la cámara de gas”). Furthermore, references to the poet’s responsibilities to his

³² It may be worthwhile to note that Octavio Paz, in a prologue to a collection of twentieth century Mexican poets known as Poesía en movimiento (1966), praised Pacheco’s critical temperament and his “claridad quieta” (27), but warned that his poetic style could be susceptible to “estancamiento” (27).

community, such as the poet's discussion with the High Priest of the Council, are autobiographical, placing the poem in a more contemporary context. Therefore, the community to which the speaker refers could be understood as Pacheco's literary community as well as his own identity as a Mexican and Latin American writer.

Key to "Descripción de un naufragio" is the way Pacheco mixes modern and tribalistic terminology to disclose the various ways that violence manifests itself. By intermingling modern and tribal references, Pacheco is implicitly suggesting that the dominant forces that influence community formation have changed little, if at all. In spite of the perceived progress of modern society due to technological advances, modern notions of democracy, and the presence of international peace organizations, the poet suggests that modern advances may be co-opted by the forces of oppression, as Nazi Germany did with the use of the gas chamber, to continue their exploitation of less empowered countries and peoples. In addition, by showing violence as an ongoing process of military and economic domination, Pacheco forces the reader to consider to what extent foreign powers carry on their domination over less empowered countries in a contemporary context. During the sixties, the United States continued its military domination of Latin America, supporting military actions against unfriendly regimes in Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Brazil. However, the United States also was receiving significant negative press for the escalation of its war in Vietnam. Taking into account the book's date of publication, 1969, Pacheco must not have the United States far from mind. Subsequent poems of No me preguntes, such as "Un defensor" and "Ya saben para quién trabajan," confirm Pacheco's ideological critique of the United States.

The second poem, “La transparencia de las enigmas,” which also contains many characteristics of a prose poem, expresses itself from a position of authority as the speaker confidently invites the reader to confront the problems that beset humanity: “pensemos en las cosas que ya se avecinan” (No me preguntes 14). The speaker affiliates himself with the victimized, who have suffered at the expense of an unnamed other: “Seres entre dos aguas, marginales de ayer y de mañana; es esto lo que hicieron de nosotros” (15). Although he hesitates to name the oppressors, his critique begins to identify subtly those parties who are guilty of oppression. With references to “derechos feudales,” his social commentary suggests the economic abuses of Native Americans during the Spanish Conquest, but in a modern context they may also hint at the oppressive institutions of global capitalism: “hechiceros capaces de encadenar el mundo y ejercer saqueo impune y derechos feudales contra la muchedumbre inexpugnable” (15).³³ Certainly, after taking into account the contemporary focus of the section’s title, “En estas circunstancias,” it is easy to see that Pacheco likely has in mind the growing economic domination of the world by multinational and, primarily Western based, corporations.

Other passages in the prose poem also point toward a more authoritative poet who confidently describes the social predicament of contemporary times. He identifies words, particularly those transmitted by computerized media, as violently complicitous by seducing the poor and oppressed with false promises of material prosperity: “en virtud de palabras como símbolos, musiquitas verbales electrónicamente amplificadas e imágenes que anegan con la proximidad de bienestar recintos donde llamea la miseria” (15).

³³ Pacheco’s political perspective will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

However, the abject conditions of the oppressed pierce through the deception of the capitalist media: “La realidad destruye la ficción nuevamente” (16).

In spite of the poet’s derisive comments about the “vanas tretas” (“Descripción” 13) of his previous poetry, prior philosophical concerns that addressed the relationship between the self and the other from Lacanian and Heraclitian perspectives continue to be expressed. For example, Pacheco recalls Heraclitus by continuing to represent the entities of the universe in a state of eternal conflict. Echoing Lacan, he underscores the role of language in shaping the way people see themselves and the outside world. Therefore, his philosophic stance and stylistic techniques in his two prior books are transformed in No me preguntes. In the first two poems of No me preguntes, the poet avoids the dense, symbolic imagery that was present in most of Los elementos and El reposo and he refrains from using standard poetic devices of hyperbaton and enjambment. Even though the first prose poem uses speech that recalls an ancient tribal community, it takes the form of prose, recanted like a dialogue between two individuals. Furthermore, unlike the impersonal poet of his previous books, No me preguntes’ speaker readily confesses his own personal experience as a Mexican author, and he also recognizes the involvement of the reader in the writing process.

The prosaic language of No me preguntes signals Pacheco’s concern with speaking in a more intimate way with his reader, but it also shows indebtedness to the popular Mexican poet, Jaime Sabines (1926-1999). Marco Antonio Campos credits Sabines as being one of the founders of modern Mexican poetry. The critic observes that Sabines’ “colloquial style, so disarmingly natural, makes the common reader believe in the

wonderful illusion that poetry is simple, or at least accessible, and the more experienced readers are astonished by the difficult and mysterious accuracy of that simplicity” (510).

In “El retorno de la poesía popular,” Pacheco applauds the publication of an anthology of popular Mexican poetry of the twentieth century, Poesía popular mexicana compiled by Luis Miguel Aguilar, but he emphasizes Sabines’ importance to Mexican this genre of poetry by criticizing Sabines’ conspicuous exclusion from the anthology. Furthermore, Pacheco’s comments on Mexico’s popular poetry provide certain insights into the prosaic voice found in No me preguntes. Pacheco praises the ability of certain poets and artists to absorb and transmit the ideas of other writers and thinkers in ways that filter anonymously into the consciousness of the general public becoming “la inmortalidad del anonimato” (30). In one example, Pacheco observed how the well-known song, “Macorina” sung by Mexican singer, Chavela Vargas, was actually composed by Asturian poet, Alfonso Camín, who had lived in Mexico during the Spanish Civil War. Therefore, Pacheco’s change to prosaic verse could reflect his own desire to assimilate his previous philosophical concerns, shaped by Heraclitian and psychoanalytical concepts, into Mexican popular discourse and consciousness.

While the morally ambiguous tone permeating both Los elementos and El reposo made the poet’s own ideological convictions unclear, the authoritative speaker of these early poems of No me preguntes is increasingly drawn to take a clear ideological position. The speaker of “La transparencia” reiterates that that there is no option for escapist diversions. One must either join the voices of protest or support the forces of oppression. Not to act is to be like the “fariseo” (No me preguntes 15). Although he represents the fight against injustice as a lost cause, there is a clear call to agency: “la

fundación del porvenir, y allí tal vez el fuego eterno nos espere a los tibios” (15). The invitation to action is repeated: “Lo urgente en todo caso es alinearse en uno u otro lado porque ya en la batalla no se admite a los corresponsales de guerra que en su incoherente neutralidad pueden ir de una trinchera a otra sin problema” (15-16).

In spite of the activist voice present in “La transparencia,” he also admits his own doubts and shortcomings. In addition, he persists in voicing these doubts in the form of prose:

Y dispongan de mí según mis culpas. Por el momento nada me ampara sino la lealtad a mi confusión. Y todo lo que digo será empleado en mi contra. Ya no tengo respuestas pero asedio todas mis certidumbres; les pongo como si se tratara de murallas dos grandes signos de interrogación en el lomo. (16)

By questioning the validity of his own ideological convictions, the speaker contests the idea of knowledge as absolute. Interestingly, the passage’s reference to “murallas” recalls the initial poem of Los elementos, “Árbol entre dos muros.” In “Árbol,” Pacheco represented human subjectivity as an ephemeral “árbol” of light besieged on each side by two “muros” of night. Pacheco used Lacanian-like motifs to portray human subjective awareness as inescapably separated from an inaccessible realm, or “muro,” where linguistic signification and thought took place. Even though allusions to Lacanian signification are no longer present in No me preguntes, we can see how recycling terminology from his previous volumes of poetry maintains a sense of philosophical continuity. Consequently, by disclosing his own doubts, the speaker of No me preguntes continues to illustrate the limited capacities with which people understand and interact with the outside world.

An important passage of “La transparencia” blames the existence of violence and oppression on the arrogance associated with human belief systems. In this case, the

passage makes an implicit reference to Biblical tradition by alluding to Genesis 26, where God appoints Adam to be lord over the animal kingdom. Pacheco's passage reads: "la ebriedad de creernos, por mandato de Dios, amos eternos" (15). By using the collective pronoun, "nos," the poet is including himself as well as the rest of humanity for the execution and propagation of injustice in the world based on this mistaken and religiously influenced ideology. Instead of centering his attack on a particular economic or political institution, his critique, on a broader scale, is more precisely directed toward totalizing belief systems that have allowed people to consider themselves as unquestioned masters of the world's resources, whereas they should be its stewards.

Key to the political commentary of these first two poems is its mobile positioning of the poetic subject. The speaker emphasizes the exploitative possibilities of language (for example, "en virtud de palabras como símbolos, musiquitas verbales electrónicamente amplificadas e imágenes que anegan con la proximidad de bienestar recintos donde llamea la miseria"). Yet, at other times he expresses confidence in his admissions to the reader: for example, his exhortations to the reader to take an ideological position against the parties of exploitation. He sympathizes with the oppressed, often presented as victims of economic exploitation, but he also considers himself part of the system of oppression. Hoeksema affirms that there is this oscillation between two extremes, noting that "el 'yo' [en los poemas de Pacheco] es un exiliado de su comunidad en desintegración y, sin embargo, es un participante en sus desastres" (82).

Pacheco's interest in the social and political implications of language is part of a greater Latin American polemic in the sixties that was reconsidering the responsibilities of Latin American writers to their respective communities. Although occurring outside

the label of postmodernism, the polemic took the form of a heated debate between Óscar Collazos and Julio Cortázar.³⁴ While Collazos argued that the miserable state of life in Latin America demanded an urgent and potentially militant response to social problems, Cortázar argued that the writer's chief responsibility was to promote a radical change of society's consciousness by revolutionizing language.

With respect to poetry, José Miguel Oviedo also points out the conflictive pressures experienced by the Latin American poets of the sixties but, unlike Cortázar and Collazos, Oviedo interprets the polemic from the standpoint of postmodernity. Oviedo understands this crisis as a struggle between the poet's need to report on the dire social and political conditions of his or her homeland and the moral ambiguity associated with postmodern influences coming from North America and Europe (*Historia* 421). It is clear at this point in *No me preguntes* that Pacheco is similarly being pulled by both sides of the postmodern/social protest argument. He expresses both the obligation and the desire to make social and political commentary, but he continues to be restrained by his own postmodern sense of complicity in contributing to the regime of violence. Akin to Lyotard, Pacheco recognizes no grand solutions, or "metanarratives" (Lyotard xxiv) as an absolute standard upon which people or countries may employ for a better society.

³⁴ The debate between Latin American intellectuals like Collazos and Cortázar regarding politics and literature may have been influenced by a similar polemic in Europe between French thinkers like John Paul Sartre and Albert Camus in the forties and fifties. Critic David Carroll observes: "If for Sartre literature has a fundamental role in forming the critical, reflexive consciousness essential for freedom, for Camus art and literature represent critical alternatives to history and politics that are also necessary for freedom, necessary in fact for the freedom from history and politics that for him is a force necessary for their transformation" (80-81). The debate between Collazos and Cortázar roughly followed these same theoretical positions. Although Cortázar was initially a fervent supporter of the Cuban Revolution, at least, until 1968 (Standish 225), he, like Camus, focused on the transformation of language and consciousness as a first step to political transformation. Standish points out that Cortázar "was a man of impressive political strength, but an equally strong defender of literature on its own terms (226). Collazos, following Sartre, promoted a more direct engagement with political issues, which included a direct confrontation with the powers of oppression. The key essays from these Latin American writers, as well as a contribution by Mario Vargas Llosa, were published as part of *La literatura en la revolución y la revolución en la literatura*.

However, by asking the reader to choose a side between opposing parties, Pacheco diverges from strict conformity to a traditional and Western vein of postmodern thinkers, such as Lyotard, who consider all forms of ideological engagement as a move toward totalization.³⁵

In her book, The Politics of Postmodernism, Linda Hutcheon emphasizes the importance of complicitous critique, of reflexivity and historicity, that at once inscribe and subvert the conventions and ideologies of the dominant cultural forces (9). Hutcheon responds to opponents who accuse postmodernists of ideological or political neutrality by suggesting that postmodernism is political in its “critique of the view of representations as reflective (rather than as constitutive) of reality and of the accepted idea of ‘man’ as the centered subject of representation, but it is also the exploitation of these same challenged foundations of representations” (18). However, in spite of its political qualities, she acknowledges that postmodernism differentiates itself from feminism and other ideological movements in that “such a theory [of agency as in feminist discourse] is visibly lacking in postmodernism” (22).

We can see in these early poems of No me preguntes how the poet is walking the boundary between social protest and a postmodern ambiguity referred to by Oviedo and Hutcheon. Dating back to El reposo, in poems like “III.10”, Pacheco’s own sense of complicity has continuously been intermingled with his own desire for protest against the enablers of social injustice. He repeatedly subverts ideologies in his criticism of capitalist exploitation and military adventurism, but he also inscribes ideologies by portraying violence as an inescapable force common to all people and all the elements of

³⁵ I have in mind Lyotard’s comment: “Lest us wage a war on totality; let us be witnesses to the unrepresentable; let us activate the differences and the honor of the name” (82).

the universe. Pacheco's first two books, Los elementos and El reposo, recall Hutcheon's view by destabilizing mimetic assumptions of language that claim to reflect an outside reality.³⁶

In No me preguntes, "La transparencia" also challenges ideological representations from a postmodern perspective by pointing out the poet's own epistemological shortcomings (for example, "nada me ampara sino la lealtad a mi confusión" (16)) and by showing language's misrepresentation of the outside world (for example, "en virtud de palabras como cimbolos, musiquitas verbales electrónicamente amplificadas ... que anegan ... los recintos donde llamea la miseria"). Pacheco further echoes Hutcheon's understanding of postmodernist critique by espousing no effective "theory of agency" (Hutcheon 22). In spite of the urgency expressed in these initial two poems, his call to action lacks the militancy common to protest poetry. He ends the "La transparencia" exactly as he began, beckoning the reader to consider seriously "las cosas que ya se avecinan" (16).

The following four poems tend to be the most overtly political of the book. In "Un defensor de la prosperidad," the poet continues to speak from a position of authority as he recounts how the typical American marine fighting in Vietnam is largely unaware of the oppressive military and economic systems that he is supporting.

The poem's speaker ironically observes that the marine "murió en la guerra, confiado en el vigor que da el Corn Flakes / y en las torvas palabras del texano" (No me preguntes, vv. 10-11). Interestingly, while the first two poems did not directly specify the parties of oppression, references in "Un defensor" to "Corn Flakes" and "las torvas palabras del texano" make clear references to the power of North American economic industry as well

³⁶ For example, refer to "Luz y silencio" of Los elementos and "I.11" and "I.12" of El reposo.

as the North American president during the sixties, Texan Lyndon Johnson. The poem's date of composition is shown as January, 1967, coincides with military escalations in Vietnam, which began under the latter part of Johnson's administration and were carried through in the succeeding Nixon administration of 1969. Although world discontent with the Vietnam War perhaps reached its apex during the My Lai massacres, which occurred in March of 1968, the date of Pacheco's poem does coincide with the increased military activity of the United States in Vietnam.

"En lo que dura el cruce del Atlántico" links the poet, at least sympathetically, to a Marxist position by eulogizing Che Guevara. He characterizes Guevara as a protector of the "condenados de la tierra" (16). Written in the month of Guevara's death at the hands of Bolivian and North American soldiers, the poem is a compassionate tribute to the Marxist fighter as well as a commentary on how the capitalist media ironically immortalizes those who fight to overturn the powers to which the media itself is so intricately tied. References to Guevara as "héroe" (2) and "martirio" (8) and to US involvement (6) in Guevara's death clearly demonstrate a certain emotional affinity for Guevara's efforts. Although Pacheco's postmodern sense of moral relativity and complicity bar him from a clear embracement of Marxist ideology, he does express compassion and, at times, guarded praise for Marxist leaders such as Che Guevara.

After reading these "political" poems in the context of the first and final line of No me preguntes' second poem: "pensemos... en las cosas que ya se avecinan" ("La transparencia" 14, 16), one sees how Pacheco more vigorously identifies the aggressors and victims of world violence. By aligning himself with a specific group, that is, the poor, against those classes which he deems as guilty of oppression, that is, US military

and multinational capitalism, among others, the speaker emerges with a more authoritative voice.

In poems like “Un defensor” and “En lo que dura,” where Pacheco takes a clear partisan position against US economic and military institutions, he is in danger of compromising the philosophical complexity of his poetics by disclosing his own ideological positions. In addition, Pacheco assumes a position of authority that could be considered inconsistent with Lyotard’s opposition to expressions of totality (82) and Hutcheon’s notion of complicitous critique (2, 9). However, “Un defensor” and “En lo que dura” not only indicates an ideological divergence from the postmodern theories of Lyotard and Hutcheon, they also confirm Pacheco’s comment that in his 1966 essay that the events of the time make ideological critique close to necessary (“Aproximación” 218). From reading these two poems, we understand that the events Pacheco has close to mind are the military and economic aggressions of the United States.

By referring to specific times and events, he runs the risk of dating these poems so that uninformed readers in future generations may not be sufficiently aware of motivating events to identify fully with the emotional urgency that inspired the poem’s creation. Efrain Huerta, one of Mexico’s most well known social poets, serves as a case in point. His unabashed support for Marxist ideals was openly expressed in the poem, “Palomas sobre Varsovia: II.” A portion of the text reads: “Varsovia socializada, hecha cristal por los campeones del trabajo” (*Poesía* 7). However, Frank Dauster lucidly points out the ironic reading that such a passage has in modern times, given the notoriety of the Polish worker’s group, Solidarity, which worked throughout the seventies and eighties to overturn the repressive Communist regime in Poland (60).

While passages examined in this chapter are taken from Pacheco's first edition of No me preguntes, which was published in 1969, a review of his most recently published anthology of 2000 show significant revisions. Unlike the first edition poems of "Un defensor," and "En lo que dura," the poet has omitted the dates of publication, which had closely connected the verses to the external events that inspired their publication. Furthermore, the reedited verses camouflage the author's own ideological allegiances, which were apparent in the original collection. For example, "Un defensor de la prosperidad" had initially connected the forces of capitalism ("Corn Flakes") and political domination ("las torvas palabras del texano") to the unnecessary loss of life in Vietnam. In the reedited version, the poem is retitled in a way that limits the ideological partisanship implicit in the original. Instead, the reedited poem shown below is simply titled, "Marine." Absent are references to economic domination (i.e. "Corn Flakes") and to the complicity of the American President. Instead, the poem's speaker ironically notes that the marine died rather pointlessly while in combat, trying to stop oppression with more oppression, by putting out "incendios con el fuego" (1). Although we continue to recognize that Pacheco is referring to the United States' aggression in Vietnam, his omission of words such as "Corn Flakes" (No me preguntes 17, l. 10) and "las palabras torvas del texano" (No me preguntes 17, l. 11), lessen the stridency of his critique of the US' economic hegemony and military aggression.

Similarly, the reedited version of "En lo que dura," which had originally lamented Che Guevara's assassination, is more guarded in the speaker's ideological leanings. The poem, referred to as "Che" in the reedited version, is reduced to one sentence divided over four lines. The poem simply points out that the killers of Guevara, upon murdering

him, have ironically given him “la vida perdurable” (4). In a 1965 essay, Pacheco observes that humans were existing in times that made social and political commentary necessary (“Aproximación” 218), but he gives us few clues about the political views which he personally supports. Following the 1965 article, Pacheco has also been reluctant to express explicitly his own political views and ideology. In the revised poem, “Che,” we see that the poet has removed his previous references to Che as “héroe” (No me preguntes, l. 2) and “martirio” (No me preguntes, l. 8). In addition, the poem omits references to US’ covert involvement in Guevara’s assassination. The revised poem uses “Ellos” (1) to characterize Che’s killers. We can see how the speaker’s ideological sympathies are scarcely disclosed in the reedited poem. He concludes the poem only by showing the irony of Guevara’s persecutors, who in killing him, have also given him immortality.

In his introduction to these reedited poems, which were first released in 1980 as part of his first anthology, Tarde o temprano, Pacheco discounts any notions of a definitive, finalized poem. He states that all poems have a dated life expectancy and must be continually subject to editing and improvement. However, he considers these revised poems, though significantly different from the originals in some cases, to be the same poem (10). In my opinion, even though Pacheco’s revisions to poems like “Un defensor” and “En lo que dura” may not alter the central guiding force of the originals, his revisions do reveal a significant change in the poet’s ideological positioning at different points in time.

Some of the poems of No me preguntes’ second section follow the same political and social trajectory of the first section. For example, one of the poems that demonstrates a

strong social critique is “Ya todos saben para quién trabajan.” This poem derides the all-encompassing system of power formed by multinational corporations and foregrounds how the sometimes invisible power structure affects the speaker’s everyday lifestyle. Not coincidentally, the corporations listed are all North American. It is pertinent to note that at the time of publication of No me preguntes that approximately 60% of Mexico’s imports and exports were coming from or were bound for the United States (Ruggle and Hamour 274). In “Ya todos saben,” the poet implicitly questions the freedom of choice in a market where products and prices are monopolized by a few multinational powers like the United States. Interestingly, Pacheco signals his own involvement in the network of economic powers as his own income only serves to further enrich the coffers of other multinational companies.

The persistent appearance of metapoetry in the second section of No me preguntes stands in stark contrast to the socially preoccupied poet of the book’s previous section. Many of these metapoems explore the frontier that separates true authorial creation from what has been consciously or unconsciously borrowed from other texts. For example, in “Homenaje a la cursilería,” Pacheco evaluates the legacy left by the romantic poet, Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer. In Bécquerian fashion, Pacheco parodies the beautiful love poetry of the nineteenth century Spanish poet. Pacheco’s lines, “Besarla muchas veces y en secreto / en el ultimo día / antes de la terrible separación” (5-7) may be a challenge to the reader to compare the sentimentality voiced by Pacheco to the kistchy (“cursilería”) words that Pacheco finds in Bécquer. In fact, he ends the poem slightly modifying a famous line from Bécquer’s “Rima LIIP”: “que nunca volverán las golondrinas” (No me preguntes l.14). Pacheco’s particular use of the Spaniard’s poem suggests that Bécquer’s

romantic poetry, or “cursilería,” has fallen out of fashion in more modern times. Along these lines, Norma Klahn interprets the poem as an “ironic rejection of sentimentality” (88). Nonetheless, his own lyrics approximate Bécquer’s style. Therefore, the poem may be read not only as a parody of Bécquer, but also as a self-parody of Pacheco’s own style. By emulating Bécquer, Pacheco forces the reader to wonder to what extent Bécquer’s style has become kitschy and has inconspicuously passed through to modern Hispanic texts, including his own poems. Consequently, Pacheco’s parody of Bécquer allows the reader to draw key points of comparison between modern Hispanic poets and the Spanish poet, which may have otherwise passed through the Spanish language unnoticed.

Pacheco’s search for his own creative voice calls into question some of the implicit assertions of Los elementos, which suggest that the poetic experience is largely a production of the text occurring outside the poet’s control. Ron Friis has noted this contrast in Pacheco’s poetry pointing out that Pacheco moves between two modern conceptions of authorial creativity: “The growing tension between creative control and untameable textuality is the key to the development of Jose Emilio Pacheco’s poetics” (60). In his reference to textuality, Friis has in mind the idea that Pacheco’s poems are the product of a number of different writers.

In addition to Bécquer, Pacheco writes several poems about the *modernista* poet, Ruben Darío, who was one of Bécquer’s greatest admirers. Darío stands out for his attempts to create a truly authentic Latin American literature through the *modernista* movement. However, I also believe that Darío is of interest to Pacheco for his ideas on authorship. Alicia Rivero [-Potter] points out that in a number of Darío’s poems, including “Las diludaciones,” he represents the author as a visionary, a “vate y creador”

(17). In "Declaración de Varadero," Pacheco counters these prophetic conceptions of the author held by Darío. He highlights Darío's humble return to Nicaragua at the end of his life. Since social issues did not predominate in Darío's early writings, perhaps not far from Pacheco's mind is the Nicaraguan poet's initial rejection of Latin American social issues and his subsequent return to Latin American social commentary.³⁷ In addition, the poem dismantles Darío's notion of the poet as a genius or visionary. A portion of the text reads:

Los hombres somos efímeros,
lo que se unió se unió para escindirse
-sólo el árbol tocado por el rayo
guarda el poder del fuego en su madera,
y la fricción libera esa energía. (No me preguntes 25-29).

The speaker portrays the act of creation as something driven by a sudden, outside spark, "el árbol tocado por el rayo" (27). The poet's choice of "árbol" also recalls his poem "Árbol entre dos muros" from Los elementos, which also characterized the poetic act as an event occurring outside the conscious control of the poet. However, the poet of "Declaración" also observes that "la fricción libera esa energía" (29). By saying that friction is the catalyst that initiates textual production, the poet also assigns some responsibility for the text to the author. I interpret this passage to say that the poet does contribute to artistic production by lending himself or herself to the struggle to write. In other words, the poet must read other texts, and she or he must put pen to paper. In reading and writing, these multiple texts unconsciously commingle, and with the friction of the competing ideas and words and phrases of each text, a new text is formed by an author.

³⁷ One early work that demonstrates a social commentary is a short story, "El fardo," about poverty in Azul (1888).

One must consider that Pacheco's evaluation of the *modernistas* is conducted in contemplation of his own poetry. Therefore, Pacheco praises Darío's attempt to establish a uniquely Latin American form of expression, but he counters Darío's ideas on creation by showing the poetic act as a merger of texts (a notion akin to intertextuality that we will discuss later in the chapter). Ultimately, the speaker forgives Darío for his vision of the poet as lone prophet or oracle. The poem ends: "ya podemos / perdonar a Darío (No me preguntes 31-32), a conclusion that the poet could very possibly be directing toward himself.

While Pacheco may imply that the writer must invest certain energies (i.e. reading other texts and writing as a regular exercise) to allow the text to be written, "Job 18, 2" addresses the transient nature of all writing, particularly in the modern age. The graphic layout of the text, which features visual indentations and enhanced linear separation at key points of the poem, encourages the reader to consider not only the words of the poem, but also the space between them. Pacheco's interest in the graphic layout of the poetic text dates back to ancient times, particularly in the Far East, but in the modern era, prior examples of concrete poetry can be found in French poets, Stéphane Mallarmé and Guillaume Apollinaire and Latin American poets, such as Vicente Huidobro, Juan José Tablada and Octavio Paz. Concrete poetry also experienced a revival in Brazil that began in the fifties by poets like Augusto de Campos and Haroldo de Campos. The text of Pacheco's poem titled "Job 18, 2" reads:

Y seguimos puliendo, desgastando
un idioma ya seco;

experimentos
-tecnológicamente deleznales-

para que brote el agua
en el desierto. (No me preguntes 5-10)

The Biblical passage to which the title, “Job 18,2” refers, “How long will you hunt for words? Consider, and then we shall speak” (Harper Collins 769), denaturalizes the act of communication by imploring Job to consider the underlying rules that govern the communicative act prior to engaging in dialogue. The Biblical passage relates to a conversation between Job and a companion, Bildad. Job has previously proclaimed his virtuous ways to his friend, but Bildad believes that Job’s suffering is a signal of God’s punishment for his wrongdoing. By referring to this particular Biblical passage in the book, Job, Pacheco uses Bildad’s criticism of Job to highlight how human expression is used to justify one’s own subjective beliefs and actions, but it also points out the need to understand the underlying rules of communication that may alter and affect how closely a message reflects an objective reality.

In the portion of Pacheco’s text, which I have included in the six lines above, the speaker attempts to explain some of these rules in a modern context. Language and literature have now supposedly exhausted themselves of creative possibilities. The desert, possibly represented in graphic form as the blank space between indented texts and the space separating the stanzas, symbolizes the barren state of language and will become a frequent symbol used by Pacheco to portray the modern writer as existing in a wasteland. The advent of approaches and technologies, such as Pacheco’s own experimentation with visual spacing in this poem (which harks back to the vanguard and even earlier), fail to provide any enduring literary breakthroughs. In another poem, the poet’s struggle to write, which is visible throughout the second section of No me preguntes, even leads to an ironic sense of hostility toward the task of writing. In “Crítica

de la poesía," the speaker even refers disparagingly to poetry as "la perra infecta, la sarnosa poesía, / risible variedad de neurosis, / precio que algunos hombres pagan / por no saber vivir" (No me preguntes 7-10).

Therefore, Pacheco's search for poetic novelty reveals certain linguistic considerations that have significant implications in a broader social and political context. First, Pacheco uses the romantic poetry of Bécquer and the *modernista* poetry of Darío to demonstrate how all poetic styles have a limited shelf life, but he also points out that these "outdated" poetic styles may creep in and subtly transform themselves under the guise of new words and new approaches used in modern texts. Consequently, the subtle ways with which poetry is absorbed into texts may ultimately produce a significant effect on human consciousness. Secondly, even though Pacheco consciously uses Bécquer's texts, his poem on Darío points out that the spark of creativity involves the merging of texts, and that this occurs outside the conscious control of the author. By representing the act of writing as a collaborative adventure occurring in one's unconscious, Pacheco challenges conventional characterizations of the poet as a creative genius. Thus, he contests the idea of the poet as genius and visionary, including its pretensions to mastery (critiqued in "la ebriedad de creernos amos eternos" in "La transparencia") against which Pacheco is fighting.

When read in the context of Pacheco's previous invitation to the reader, "pensemos in las cosas que ya se avecinan" ("Transparencia" 14, 16), these metapoetic poems that challenge traditional notions about true authorial creation develop a subtle critique that betrays the centered and authoritarian speaker that was so prevalent in No me preguntes' first section. As Pacheco searches for his own creative place among these predecessors,

his references to prior poets ironically undercut his own desire for a unique voice.

Therefore, Pacheco's wish for a solution to the world's social ills (i.e. economic and military exploitation, etc.) becomes increasingly directed against language itself, and more specifically, against the authoritative power associated with the speaking author.

No me preguntes' third section, entitled "Postales/conversaciones/epigramas," represents a clear departure from the political tenor apparent in many of No me preguntes' previous poems. The authoritative subject is significantly less visible, and references to military, economic or political domination are almost completely absent. A significant number of poems refer to places and figures in Europe, serving as a type of travel log that celebrates the reinvention of Europe through poetry. The third section's epigraphs from Alfonso Reyes and the seventeenth century Viceroy of Mexico, Don Sebastian de Toledo, redefine Latin America's identity with respect to Europe. Friis observes that

the poems that follow are testimonies of an eyewitness who describes his travels, both literary and geographical, like a Von Humboldt in reverse: he chronicles his encounters in the Old World and performs a cultural transposition of translation of those commonplaces into the Spanish of Mexico. This represents a reversal of one of the cornerstones of the Latin American literary tradition: the European accounts of the New World. (103)

Like the second section of No me preguntes, the repeated references to artists deconstruct fixed notions of authorship as an autonomous enterprise. The poet's voice becomes subsumed into the texts of European artists like Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, William Turner, Antonio Canale and European writers like Jorge Manrique, Goethe and José Ortega y Gasset. In his repeated references to prominent European artists and writers, Pacheco continues to expand his inquiry into intertextual notions of authorship.

As I discussed in the first chapter, Julia Kristeva is generally credited with first introducing the concept of intertextuality. Key to Kristeva's work was her opposition to Western modes of communication, which had "consistently refused the 'semiotic,' thereby dissociating the subject from language and adopting a unidimensional mode of language and self" (McCance 395). As an alternative to traditional Western discourse, Kristeva suggested "an alternative understanding of language as a material practice which can support political revolution" (McCance 394). By intermingling allusions to both textual and visual artists, Pacheco is also challenging common notions of authorial creation that tacitly promote, as in Kristeva, a "unidimensional mode of language and self." Furthermore, given the political tenor of some of Pacheco's previous poems like "Ya todos saben para quién trabajan," we can discern how Pacheco, in recognizing the code systems of other artists, is also advancing on a broad scale revolutionary attitudes and consciousness.

Moreover, in "Postales/conversaciones/epigramas," what strikes the reader is not Pacheco's realistic account of European culture and geography, but his artistic reinvention of Europe as a source of wonder and intrigue. Many of these references to European art and artists serve as a point of departure for Pacheco's own poetic explorations on art and language. For example, in "Escolio a Jorge Manrique," the poet uses Manrique's famous *copla* to challenge the Spanish poet's representation of death as a passage into a final harmonious, resting place expressed from a Christian point of view. Pacheco counters that the sea is not death "sino la eterna / circulación de las / transformaciones (No me preguntes 3-5). Although Manrique clearly serves as an inspiration, Pacheco challenges the Spanish author's supposition of an underlying

“Christian” meaning for human existence. Furthermore, his use of “transformaciones” (5) recalls his key poem of El reposo, “II.2: Don de Heráclito,” which stated: “el reposo de fuego es tomar forma / con su pleno poder de transformarse.” (Tarde 6-7). When read in the context of “Don de Heráclito,” Pacheco sees life as part of a series of continuous transformations that proceed indifferent to Christian concepts of immortality.

Experimenting with the spatial layout of the poem, Pacheco approximates the effect of perpetual motion of the sea by spreading the lines out across the page like waves.

Because of its repetition of the sea motif, the subsequent poem, “La experiencia vivida,” is in many ways a continuation of his previous commentary on Manrique. He continues pondering the general nature of form, which I understand as order, by using the metaphor of the sea. The speaker asks if these forms are “instrumentos de la Inspiración / o de falaces citas literarias?” (No me preguntes 4-5). By associating “mar” with language, a diligent reader of Pacheco cannot keep far from her or his mind the importance of the “mar” in Los elementos (e.g. “Canción para escribirse en una ola,” “El mar oscuro,” etc.). In Los elementos, the sea symbolized the realm of signification housed in one’s unconscious. While acknowledging the impact of Manrique’s “mar” on his own poetry, his adaptation questions logocentric notions even in his own poetry. Does an underlying order, such as God, a Muse, or even a fundamental intelligence associated with reason, reflect itself as “Inspiración” (4) in poetry? Pacheco’s gives us no clear affirmations. Instead, he ironically suggests that poetic “truths” could be a series of commentaries based on a false assumption. By ending the poem with an open question, he allows the reader to come to her or his own conclusions.

Perhaps not by accident, the poet presents one of his most powerful metaphorical representations in the volume's next poem, "Copos de escarcha sobre Wivenhoe." A portion of the text reads:

Entrecruzados
se aglomeran y un segundo después
se han dispersado. (No me preguntes 1-5).

The snow flakes are "entrecruzados" like lovers. The poetic intensity is heightened by placing the words across the page, like concrete poetry, thus emulating the fall of the snow flakes. Although their love is transient, the power of the erotic moment is accentuated by being juxtaposed against an image suggesting imminent collapse.

Pacheco's previous ruminations on logocentrism, unresolved from the two previous poems, are put on hold as the poet includes one of his most metaphorically charged poems in the book. The text converts itself not so much into a device to pursue philosophical meaning as into a vehicle that can provoke a powerful emotional response in both writer and reader alike.

Like “Copos de escarcha,” a number of poems in this section use antithetical references to both love and death, among other types of references, to intensify the reader’s emotional reaction: “Venus Anadiomena’ por Ingres,” “Digamos que Amsterdam 1943,” “Turner's Landscape,” and “Litografía del río Colne a su paso por Wivenhoe,” “Ile Saint- Louis” “Venice,” “Pompeya,” “Mejor que el vino,” and the final poem “Dificultades para decir la verdad.” Therefore, the antithesis of love and death accomplishes a multiple purpose. Not only does the love/death motif heighten the impact

of the emotional experience of the poem, but it also positions the poetic experience within the constructive and destructive dualism established in Pacheco's earlier poetry.

Moreover, the emotional reaction evoked in many poems of the third section opposes conventional states of consciousness regarding time as progressive and constant. Instead, the speaker represents time as eternal. For example, in "Litografía del río Colne a su paso por Wivenhoe," the poet writes of the image reproduced by a lithograph of the Colne river as it passes through the English town, Wivenhoe. In the poem, the poet observes how the present moment becomes frozen into an eternity: "aquel momento / en que todo era todo" (3-4). Similarly, in "Turner's Landscape," Pacheco reflects upon how a painting by J. M. W. Turner can reduce the four seasons: spring, summer, winter and fall to "unos segundos de esta tarde" (4). Consequently, by including references to visual arts, Pacheco underscores how art, like poetry, may be used to produce beautiful moments of consciousness that defy traditional ways of understanding the outside world.

These poems also evoke an alternative consciousness regarding the way we perceive the natural world. For example, instead of presenting the earth's elements in fixed categories of liquid, solid and gas, the poet emphasizes their transformative nature. In "Litografía" he observes: "tierra y cielo eran líquidos vapores" (12) and: "[b]ajo el calor el vaporoso río / torna incesante al no volver" (14-15). The poem "José Ortega y Gasset contempla el viento" contests the steadfast immobility of the Spanish castle, El Escorial, whose massive size instills in the viewer the sensation of constancy and fixity. In his essay, "La vida en torno," Ortega y Gasset, one of Spain's most prolific 20th century thinkers, writes of the immobile appearance of the monumental complex, which was built from the iron deposits that decorated the neighboring countryside. In addition, Ortega y

Gasset also notes a certain mobile, liveliness in the wind that blew through the walls of the massive complex. Similarly, Pacheco uses these observations of the Spanish writer to counter perceptions of immobility by portraying the castle as if it were in constant transformation. Pacheco's text follows: "El Escorial inerte. / El viento pugna. / por quebrantar su trágica molicie. / Su ser es movimiento, / es su perpetuo / sostenerse a sí mismo..." (1-6).

The highly poeticized style of "José Ortega y Gasset contempla el viento" stands in sharp contrast to the prosaic style in No me preguntes' first section. The poem represents the Spanish monument as a beautiful and playful verbal construct: "Molicie de la historia / una mole de escoria, / molicie de la escoria" (25-26). This form affects the reader in a number of different ways. In addition to providing the reader with a pleasant emotional experience by the alternate arrangement of the words with a phonemic proximity: "historia/escoria" and "mole/molicie," it also underscores the power that language has to create ideas and images in the human mind that oppose fixed ways of perceiving the world. In other words, by rearranging the four words in rather arbitrary combinations, Pacheco highlights how language does not necessarily communicate an underlying truth about the outside world, but its structural arrangement may produce new mental impressions. Therefore, the passage accentuates the performative aspects of language over its ability to reflect absolute knowledge regarding the outside world.

It should be clear in reading the third section of No me preguntes that Pacheco is not merely trying to imitate the natural beauty of the outer world. The poet's own doubts regarding the mimetic powers of language, which have been voiced repeatedly throughout all three of his volumes of poetry, make it impossible for him to communicate

such an assurance. He more clearly reflects Hutcheon's comment regarding postmodern art as that which shows representation as constitutive of reality rather than as reflective of it. However, the powers of literature are not to be discounted. Poetry, particularly when the writer constantly strives for innovation, is unlike the legal and scientific discourses that dominate modern society in that it allows us to transgress traditional ways of seeing the world according to rigid constructs such as day vs. night, reality vs. fiction, or right vs. wrong.

Therefore, Pacheco, who sees the poet's responsibility as a never-ending struggle toward unattainable perfection (Ayer es nunca jamás 9), understands poetry as a fight against a type of linguistic stagnancy, whether in scientific, legal, or even literary discourse, that is closely associated with fixed, monolithic ways of understanding the outside world. Consequently, he is constantly looking for new forms and new ways to avoid such linguistic stagnancy. Writer and critic Mario Vargas Llosa affirms Pacheco's use of poetry as an alternative to conventional states of consciousness: "la palabra es un fin. La poesía ayuda a vivir, es vida en sí misma y Pacheco afirma una y otra vez que la poesía contiene lo mejor del hombre y es una garantía contra la muerte" (40).

In the third section of No me preguntes, Pacheco employs a number of other standard poetic techniques such as hyperbaton and enjambment to help evoke novel states of consciousness. Other poems reveal equally innovative poetic strategies. The poet experiments yet again with concrete poetry in well crafted poems like "La lluvia," where the typographic layout of the poem approximates the rain and in "Goethe/Gedichte," where, in spite of the poet's own ignorance of the language of the German writer, he

enhances the “música verbal” (3-4) of Goethe’s *gedichte* (i.e. “poem”) by spreading the poem’s words playfully across the page.

In “Rondó 1902,” he applies a variation of the musical rondo. The classical musical rondo is a musical form that alternates its refrains following the pattern, ABACADA. In Pacheco’s poem, he uses the pattern ABCDABC. Consequently, “Rondó 1902” rejects a clearly linear structure associated with rational thought systems. Instead, in its repetition of lines the poem emphasizes language’s ability to create or constitute reality. Therefore, “Rondó 1902” also promotes novel and therapeutic states of awareness that counter traditional modes of being associated with rational thought. What is conspicuously missing in the third section is the centered and authoritative speaker that dominated much of the book’s first poems. By foregrounding the motivating forces of love and art as a collective experience, Pacheco is implicitly promoting the curative effects of poetic (and artistic) discourse as an alternative to authoritative forms of communication. For Pacheco, the poet must attempt to provoke new forms of consciousness, but in recognizing other writers’ contributions to textual production, he encourages solidarity and collectivity in the writing process. This solidarity serves as a curative defense against our divided subjectivity.

The fourth section of No me preguntes, titled “Los animales saben,” contains a series of poems about animals. María Luisa Fischer reports that Spanish bestiaries have a medieval origin and that they were intended to describe animal or plant life in a way that reflects an underlying moral lesson of God or the universe (464). In Latin America, the early chronicles by Sahugún and Acosta continued this tradition. In the twentieth century, bestiaries returned and were popular with such writers as Jorge Luis Borges,

Julio Cortázar, Octavio Paz and Juan José Arreola, who frequently used animal emblems as part of their literary texts.

In 1968, Alberto Salas published a compendium of Latin American bestiaries that provided an overview of Latin American wildlife written from the perspective of the Spanish colonizers. Salas points out the anguish produced in the Spanish chroniclers from their interaction with the animals and plants they encountered in the New World:

Este es un bestiario con el que generalmente ha estado en pugna el conquistador. Ha sido su terror, su mortificación y su angustia, y en algunos casos su entretenimiento, su asombro o simplemente su alimento.... Estas bestias, grandes o diminutivas, reales o imaginarias, bonacibles o crueles, han integrado su mundo y su vida, se han mezclado con sus sueños y ansiedades, con sus triunfos y despiadados destinos. (10)

Pacheco's bestiaries conform to Salas' comment by accentuating the subjectively drawn, anthropomorphic qualities reflected in his own animal characterizations. Many of these poems foreground how he or other humans have projected their own fears, or biases, onto their understanding of animals. For example, in "Indagación en torno del murciélago," the poetic speaker ironically connects our portrayal of bats as aggressive beings to our own violent tendencies: "El hombre lo confina en el mal y lo detesta porque comparte la fealdad viscosa, el egoísmo, el vampirismo humano; recuerda nuestro origen cavernario y tiene una espantosa sed de sangre" (No me preguntes 44-47). Therefore, it is not surprising that many of the animals in Pacheco's poetic repertoire represent the spurned or despised of the animal kingdom: crabs, bats, mosquitoes, mice, pigs and scorpions make up part of Pacheco's animal kingdom.

We can observe how Pacheco consistently underscores the role that language plays in shaping a superficial understanding of the animal world. For example, in "Indagación," the speaker notes "Los murciélagos no saben una palabra de su prestigio literario" (1-2).

Steeped in hyperbole, the speaker proceeds to make a list of the ways bats have been defamed by human superstitions and myths throughout history. Because of the heavily ironic voice of the poem's speaker, we can see how Pacheco derides human beings for the hazardous generalizations which they employ to understand other creatures. For example, the speaker compares bats to vampires, but notes: "la pereza me impide comprobar su renombre en cualquier diccionario" (23-24).

Therefore, Pacheco's critique of human beings is directed at the underlying epistemology that people employ in their understanding of the animal world. We should remember from No me preguntes' second poem, "La transparencia," that the poem's speaker rebuked humans for possessing "la ebriedad de creernos amos eternos" (29). In his bestiary poems, Pacheco often uses "thinking" verbs that emphasize the arbitrary way in which we comprehend these animals. In "Discurso sobre los cangrejos," the poet observes: "Ignoro en cuál momento dio su nombre [su nombre; o sea, la asociación del cangrejo con el signo zodiacal, "cancer"]" (35), and in "Indagación" he confesses: "algo sé de vampiros" (79). Even the titles of these two poems contain words associated with epistemology and analysis, such as "discurso" and "indagación," that call into question the subjective ways that people categorize non-speaking beings on this planet.

Consequently, the ironic juxtaposition of his own admissions of doubt undermine his own "indagación" into the nature of the animal world. Even though at times Pacheco expresses certainties regarding his observations, his tone is so heavily ironic that his commentary turns into a satire of humans, who have deluded themselves into thinking that they objectively comprehend these animals. Livia Soto interprets this ironic voice

of the author as a type of mask, which Pacheco employs to criticize Mexican and Western society. Soto observes:

Otro tipo de enmascaramiento es el que se da en los bestiarios y fábulas. Escritos en la tercera persona y en tono impersonal objetivo son poemas didácticos, de intención crítica, en los que, en algunos casos con ironía fina y en otros ... con obvio sarcasmo, se impugna la sociedad mexicana, el mundo occidental, la condición mexicana. (112)

While Pacheco's satire undermines common notions of objective knowledge, many of the bestiary poems contest pretensions of superiority by showing how humans and animals share many of the same characteristics. In "Espejo de los monos," he uses monkeys as a mirror image that reflects back to humans their own buffoonery:

cuando el mono te clava la mirada
estremece pensar
si no seremos
su espejito irrisorio
y sus bufones. (1-5)

Similarly, in "Fragmento de un poema devorado por los ratones," the poet personifies rats by observing how they form communities, practice primitive rituals and "adoran las tinieblas" (2). In the end, his description of rats suggests that they are not fundamentally different from human beings. Both rats and humans are driven by an underlying fear of attack: "Incisivos, hambrientos, enfrentados / a la persecución, al ocultarse. / Siempre al acecho de quien los acecha..." (5-7). He ends the poem with an ellipsis, thus allowing the reader to make her or his own conclusions about exactly which animal, rat or human, Pacheco is really speaking.

Even though Pacheco criticizes people for exalting themselves at the expense of the animal world, he does not always represent other creatures as innocent victims of human aggression. Animals, like people, are also capable of brute violence. "Biología del

halcón” places the falcon high on food chain because of its predatory abilities: “Viven para la muerte. Su vocación es dar la muerte” (5-6). By showing violence as an inevitable part of the animal and human societies, Pacheco recalls El reposo in his challenge to the moral basis which we use to understand and interact with the other inhabitants of the world. If animals, including humans, are acting out natural instincts of predator and prey, does this make human actions inherently “bad?”

Therefore, Pacheco follows a morally relativistic path already established in El reposo that depicts violence as a necessary event for the perpetuation of the universe. Rather than singling out people for their merciless treatment of animals, he criticizes, instead, how language has permitted humans to delude themselves into thinking that they exist outside of the natural rules of predator and prey. Pacheco’s ideological commentary, then, is for the most part deconstructive. That is, he reveals the complicitous role of language in allowing people to self-appoint themselves as “amos eternos” (“La transparencia” 15) of the world’s resources. In his bestiary poems, Pacheco repositions humans as equal members of the world community. Consequently, he implicitly reveals an underlying ideological message running throughout all of his poetic works: the interdependence of humans with the rest of the world’s communities.

The fifth section of the book, “Aproximaciones,” includes Pacheco’s translations of contemporary poets such as Carl Sandburg, Adelaide Crapsey, James Agee as well as poets like the Roman satirist, Juvenal and al-Andalusian, ben Saraf. Although Pacheco previously included translations in the last section of Los elementos, their inclusion in the penultimate section of No me preguntes more forcefully encourages the reader to consider the dividing line between these translations and his own poems. Many of the

Pacheco's translated poets relate to the European tradition of literature, including two ancient poets, Roman, Juvenal, and ben Saraf. It is my opinion that the selection of these two writers relate to poets who had an impact on Spanish literature. For example, Pacheco's selection of the poem, "Satire," by ben Saraf, suggests the importance of the Arabic cultural and artistic impact on the Hispanic use of this genre. Pacheco includes a translation of a satire by Juvenal. His choice to include the satires of both authors may even reaffirm the growing satirical and ironic voice in his own poems. Once again, we can observe how Pacheco uses translations in a way that foregrounds the collaborative production of all literature and this, in turn, serves as a means to strengthen cultural ties by recognizing the contribution of all groups of people.

Even those translations of American authors such as Carl Sandburg, Adelaid Crapsey and James Agee suggest a favorable form of intertextuality that may counter the invasive presence of anglicisms in other poems of No me preguntes like "Un defensor." Therefore, Pacheco's "aproximaciones" of Anglo poets implicitly recognize the positive aspects of British and North American culture, in spite of the poet's own preoccupations with the militant and economic abuses emanating from this culture.

Michael Doudoroff notes that many of the translations bear a close resemblance to the originals, like those of Carl Sandburg and Adelaid Crapsey, but in other translations like that of James Agee, substantial changes "eliminan y reconstruyen alusiones culturales que distraerían la atención" (153). Therefore, Pacheco's alternation between precise translations and loose interpretations illuminate questions that Pacheco has previously expressed regarding intertextuality. By varying the degree of literalness, Pacheco blurs the boundaries that separate these translated poems from his own poetry.

While Julia Kristeva is credited with fostering modern theories of intertextuality, critics have taken a number of theoretical positions regarding Pacheco's use of intertextual concepts. Friis analyzes Pacheco's poems based on Harold Bloom's theories on authorship. According to Bloom, the author's desire to find his own unique voice among precursor writers requires that he symbolically sleigh his precursor writers. Mary Docter understands Pacheco's views on intertextuality as not being derived from either Bloom. She points out that the "'psychic battlefield' [affiliated with the theories of Bloom that require an antagonistic relationship between prior texts that lead to a new text] of yesterday is no longer relevant" (375). Instead, she emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between writer and predecessor noting that "Pacheco's poetics of reciprocity invites community" (375).

Many of Pacheco's later poems support Docter's observations by celebrating the past texts that make up his own poetry. For example, in "D.H. Lawrence y los poetas muertos" published in Irás y no volverás in 1972, Pacheco appears to recognize the influence of previous authors by specifically naming the great English writer. However, Pacheco's reference to "los otros poetas muertos" allows for other writers to have unconsciously impacted his work. In this poem, he sees an almost inseparable connection between his own texts and those writers who preceded him:

No desconfiamos de los muertos
que prosiguen viviendo en nuestra sangre.
No somos mejores ni distintos:
tan sólo nombres y escenarios cambian. (Tarde 1-4)

In this poem, we observe how Pacheco envisions a world with one consolidated text of past authors to which the contemporary author only lends his or her name ("nombre") at a given time and place ("escenario"). Similarly, Oviedo points out that Pacheco

understands all literature as being previously written. The modern author can only give new life to old texts. Oviedo writes:

El autor ha convertido la poesía en una especie de *ready-made*, un producto cuyo mérito no está en ningún acto creador, sino en su impacto como *travaille* en su hábil manipulación. El poeta no es un pequeño dios, sino alguien que meramente *da a ver* reclamando las zonas muertas del lenguaje y salvando la literatura de volverse del todo indiferente para la sensibilidad contemporánea: un restaurador verbal, un mediador, un intérprete.” (“José Emilio Pacheco” 54)

From Oviedo’s commentary, we can see that the writer is not entirely passive as he performs a key societal function by maintaining language at its highest state of value in the poet’s rejuvenation of old texts. Even so, by reviving old works, the poet must choose texts, omit others, and combine selected texts with those of other writers. Consequently, the act of rejuvenation and restoration still entails the active participation and modification of the poet. Perhaps, more importantly, is the way these notions of intertextual collaboration express an underlying ideology. For example, as a manipulator of texts, Pacheco undermines notions of individual authorship, as well as any connotations of genius and superiority that may accompany these notions. However, he still tries to find his own voice, which is an inconsistency that points out how thorny the problem of authorship is.

Even though the poet performs a communal function in his reorganization of texts, the act of writing (i.e. reorganizing the text) remains outside the conscious control of the writer. Similarly, we recall previous poems from Los elementos (for example, “Árbol entre dos muros” and “Canción para escribirse en una ola”) that represented textual production from a Lacanian perspective by depicting the text’s composition as an unconscious activity rather than a conscious one. In 1972, a poem entitled

“Observaciones: Arte poética,” reaffirms the prominent role of the unconscious in writing: “No tu mano: / la tinta escribe a ciegas / estas pocas palabras” (2000 1-3).

By placing the point of textual creation in the unconscious, Pacheco contests conventional notions of the subject, which, borrowing from Cartesian thought, have portrayed the human individual as a unified, subjective entity presided over by the *cogito*. The intertextual notions advanced by Pacheco, which owe an indebtedness to both Kristeva and Lacan, have in essence freed the text from the hegemony of the author. In fact, intertextual notions in Pacheco not only connect the writer to his predecessors but are also extended to the reader, who upon reading the poet’s text merges her or his own textual experience with that of the poet. Rivero explains how the proponents of intertextuality challenge the notion of subjectivity associated with the traditional author by making the following claims:

Hay, entonces, un abismo entre el yo y el subconsciente que niega la unidad tradicional del sujeto además de la del autor y lector. Ni el ego ni el autor originan el discurso o la escritura. Los códigos convencionales preceden a la consciencia individual y el texto es una construcción intertextual. (29)

In spite of all the research performed on Pacheco’s use of intertextuality, critics have not adequately addressed the social implications involved in the translation of old texts into new texts. While most critics like Docter, Oviedo and Pacheco himself view the relationship of the poet with his predecessors on very favorable terms, a number of Pacheco’s poems have also shown the poet’s entry into symbolic communication as a violent or destructive process. For example, “Canción para escribirse en una ola” (Los elementos) represented the production of the new text as a byproduct of the contentious interaction of signifiers in texts. Similarly, we may recall that “El centenario de Rubén Darío (1867-1916),” in No me preguntes’ second section, portrays textual production as

the antagonistic pull of opposing forces: “Sólo el árbol tocado por el rayo / guarda el poder del fuego en su madera / y la fricción libera esa energía” (No me preguntes 27-29). Therefore, even while Pacheco celebrates the texts of other writers that inhabit his works, he also views linguistic communication as a type of symbolic appropriation of previous texts and intertextual collaboration with other writers. In fact, at the center of his ideology are the different ways in which he distinguishes between these various types of textual production. For example, when texts are merged in the subject’s unconscious in an environment of cultural or artistic openness, there is a productive merger of texts. Consequently, the violent act of consolidation remains strictly symbolic. The final product, the new text, is a collaboration with positive effects on society. That is, the new text recognizes the significant, artistic contributions of other cultures. In this way, the writer assumes a global perspective that challenges nationalistic attitudes of superiority and undermines cultural prejudices.

The other type of intertextual appropriation is one which has destructive connotations with significant economic, military or political implications. In these cases, one text is imposed on other texts for the benefit of the dominant partner. In El reposo, the Spanish Conquest was largely facilitated by the imposition of the ideology of the Spanish colonizers on the ideology of the native American inhabitants. For example, in “III.6” Pacheco represented the Conquest as the forced subordination of Native Americans to the mandate of the viceroy of New Spain, who said: “Los hombres de esta tierra / son seres para siempre condenados / a eterna oscuridad y abatimiento. / Para callar y obedecer nacieron” (Tarde 22-5). In No me preguntes, the poet included words of North American origin that evoked connotations of militarism and economic exploitation. For example, in

“Un defensor,” the “marine” dies in vain, confident in the power of his “Corn Flakes” (No me preguntes 10). In fact, even in Pacheco’s “political” poems of the first section, the poem’s speaker does not necessarily seek to overthrow economic or political institutions. Instead, he reveals the power relations hidden in economic, political, military discourses. Pacheco shows how the poems reveal to us the various ways that authoritative discourse penetrates the everyday language of the general public.

Therefore, the intertextual interplay in the writer’s or the reader’s unconscious may have both positive and negative implications. Consequently, Pacheco’s ideology is intricately concerned with manifestations of power and oppression in language itself. In a poem published in 1985, “<<Yo>> con mayúscula,” Pacheco clearly expresses his preoccupation with the power relations implicit in authorial communication:

En inglés <<yo>> es decir <<I>>
Se escribe siempre con mayúscula
En español la lleva pero invisible.
<<Yo>> por delante
Y las demás personas del verbo
Disminuidas siempre... (Tarde 1-6)

By using intertextual collaboration as a means to challenge fixed notions of authorial creation, Pacheco is able to lessen the hegemony of the authoritative “I” in his poetry. Furthermore, his texts not only foster a symbolic community with both his reader and other poets, they also serve as a means to bridge cultural gaps between different people. In an article on Paz’s adaptation of foreign texts, Pacheco underscores the positive, social implications of Paz’s method in the ways that it merges diverse people and cultures. Pacheco observes: “Paz nos acercó lo lejano e hizo nuestro lo ajeno” (“Reloj de arena: Paz y los otros” 21). Similarly, we can reason from Pacheco’s comment on Paz that his own translations not only form a bond between foreign writers and Spanish-speaking

readers, they also extend alliances between groups of different languages as a form of cross-cultural and intertextual exchange.

The final section, “Apéndice: Cancionero apócrifo” provides biographical information and selected poems from two fictitious poets invented by Pacheco, Julián Hernández and Fernando Tejada. Friis notes that this section is “nothing more than a thinly veiled forum for the poet to express some of his ideas on criticism, translation, and influence that force the critical reader to reflect upon herself as much as on the heteronyms” (108).

The use of contrived authors creates yet another persona for the poet, and it also disputes the traditional understanding of the author as a unified and distinct entity, although it demonstrates some control on the part of Pacheco who creates this device. The self-mocking parody of the contrived biographies is accentuated by the inclusion of gallicisms, which poke fun at the elitist pretensions common to some members of the critical community. At other times, the speaker makes observations about the personal lives of the two heteronyms that have little to do with the poems themselves. By introducing the poems of Hernández and Tejada with these biographies, Pacheco continues to contest unified notions of subjectivity that attempt to link the poet’s personal life to the representations in the poems.

Even though Tejada’s biographer observes a similarity in the styles of the two poets (No me preguntes 119), the poems by Hernández and Tejada in actuality are quite different. Tejada’s are love poems addressed to an anonymous beloved, using the second person pronoun, “tú.” On the other hand, Hernández’s poems tend to be metapoetic, including short commentaries on the nature of poetry, poets, the critical community and

the antagonistic relationship between the self and the other. By writing poems under heteronyms, Pacheco challenges the reader to determine what his true voice is. Is Pacheco's real voice more like Tejada's or Hernández's? Is it possible that Pacheco's true voice is a composite of many other voices? Pacheco does not give us answers to these questions, but by including poems written under heteronyms, he continues to reveal an underlying ideology that challenges fixed notions of the authoritative and centered author.

In our analysis of No me preguntes, we recall that the poet has returned to join his tribe and, through poetry, addresses the social issues that confront his people. He beckons the reader to assist in the fight against oppression. However, instead of detailing an ideological program for the fight, the reader is exposed to a number of metapoetic texts that address authorial creation, love poems, bestiaries and poems composed by other authors and heteronyms. Therefore, critical to understanding the ideological commentary of No me preguntes is the way the centered, authoritative voice of the first section gives way to a variety of voices and personae, recalling Bakhtin's concept of "dialogic heteroglossia" (263), contained in love poems, bestiaries, translations, epigraphs and poems published under heteronyms. When read in the context of the passage: "pensemos en las cosas que ya se avecinan" ("La transparencia" 14, 16), we see how these multiple voices underscore an ideology that repositions the poetic subject away from a centered position of authority, with the subsequent difficulties that arise from such a notion, and toward a position that recognizes humans, animals and all organic and inorganic entities as equal participants in the universal community. These intertextual strategies will

become a fixture of Pacheco's developing ideology, which we will also see in our analysis of Pacheco's sixth book of poetry, Desde entonces (1980).

CHAPTER IV

FINDING FUTILITY IN THE PAST, ACKNOWLEDGING FUTILITY AS A BASIS FOR A BETTER FUTURE

Unlike Pacheco's earlier volumes of poetry, Desde entonces (1980) looks back to the past for a simpler, more harmonious relationship between human beings and the rest of the world. Although Desde entonces repeats many of the poet's experimentations with intertextuality that were apparent in No me preguntes cómo pasas el tiempo, the muted optimism of No me preguntes is gone. The poet of Desde entonces realizes that neither his intertextual experiments, nor his idealized image of the past, will produce the necessary social and political changes in the world. Therefore, Desde entonces distinguishes itself from Pacheco's previous works by its resigned tone. While continuing to show the human individual in a co-dependency with the other entities of the world, the poetic speaker uses his own sense of resignation as a basis from which people may express a shared commitment to build a better, more peaceful existence.

Desde entonces is divided into four sections.³⁸ Even though the third section is exclusively devoted to prose poems and the fourth section is a long 20 part poem initially written to accompany illustrations by Mexican artist, Vicente Rojo, the common theme throughout the four sections is time. However, unlike the poems on the theme of time in Los elementos de la noche and El reposo del fuego, which expressed time from an

³⁸ The original edition of Desde entonces (1980) included a fifth section, entitled "Aproximaciones," which featured translations of others authors such as William Carlos Williams, Eugene Montale, classical Greek poet Callimachus and various authors of haiku.

impersonal point of view, time becomes personalized in Desde entonces. Whereas Pacheco was scarcely forty years old at the time of the Desde entonces' publication, many poems in this volume of poetry are told by an aged speaker as a retrospective look at the past.

In spite of the book's focus on time, Pacheco continues to experiment with questions of intertextuality by foregrounding the collaborative way in which literary texts are produced. The book's opening epigraph is a poem written by Fernando Pessoa, the heteronym used by Portuguese poet, Alberto Caeiro. The text is written in Spanish with a notation that Pacheco has included "la versión de Octavio Paz" (Tarde 210). The text reads:

No estoy alegre ni triste.
Éste es el destino de los versos.
Los escribí y debo mostrarlos a todos.
No podría ser de otro modo.
(Tarde 210, vv. 1-4)

By recognizing the heteronym, the biographical author, the translator (Paz) as well as the reader in line 3, Pacheco once again subtly advances his ideology that poetry is a collective act in which each individual is seen as an indispensable part of the process. In addition, the speaker of Pessoa's poem compares the vocation of the poet to the color of the flower, the course of a river and the fruits of a tree: "La flor no puede ocultar su color, / Ni el río disimular su curso, / Ni el árbol esconder sus frutos..." (5-8). Even though Pacheco considers the act of versification as an essential aspect of the writer, by comparing the writing process to any other act of nature, he uses Pessoa's poem to demystify pretensions of greatness and genius associated with writing. As a result,

Pacheco implicitly represents the author on an equal level with all the other entities of the earth.

Typically, Desde entonces' temporal poems are narrated from the personal perspective of the author or from that of a literary predecessor. For example, one of the book's first poems, "Jean Cocteau se mira en el espejo," is told in the first person using the persona of the French poet, Jean Cocteau. The poem evokes a more personal vision of time since the French poet, now a septuagenarian, looks back retrospectively at his life. The text reads:

En el principio no existían los años,
sólo un continuo innumerable: la infancia,
Más tarde subrayaron su impermanencia,
fueron hierba del campo, olas adiós.
Y llegué a acumular setenta.
Este rostro de vidrio ahora es mi cara
en la luna del agrio espejo. (1-7)

The poem presents infancy as a mythic period in which the protagonist's consciousness of time had not yet begun. In the third verse the verb tense switches abruptly from imperfect to preterit tense, thus signaling the passage from infancy into adulthood. As an adult, time has passed quickly in a series of fragments like grass in the field, waves [in a homonymic play in Spanish with "[h]olas" ("hellos")] and goodbyes. The predominant motif is *tempus fugit*. The speaker's mirrored reflection, which appears in lines 6 and 7, is personified, emphasizing the bitterness with which he sees his wrinkled self-image. Therefore, we can discern that the poet's return to his past fails to reveal any real sense of a happier, more peaceful existence.

In fact, even though "Jean Cocteau" is told from a more personalized perspective of the aging French poet, we also observe how Pacheco's use of the mirror motif maintains

a sense of continuity with previous volumes of poetry like Los elementos. In “Jean Cocteau,” the protagonist feels disconnected from his mirror reflection, which takes the form of “los otros muertos” (10) that wait for him on the other side of the mirror. Consequently, as in so many poems of Los elementos, the reflection in the mirror only serves to remind the protagonist that he will also one day die like the “los otros muertos” (10) that wait for him in the mirror.

Poems such as “Jean Cocteau” are important because they show that humans are divided synchronically from their mirror image, but they are also divided temporally from their past experiences. Pacheco’s metaphysical worries with time, which are repeated throughout Desde entonces, call to mind the Argentine writer, Jorge Luis Borges. In an interview with the Jaime Alifano, Borges identifies time as the primary enigma of human existence:

There’s no way we can imagine it [the world] without time. Because time is the essential problem of existence. Time is succession. To exist is to be time. We are time; I mean that we cannot cast off time. Our consciousness is continuously passing from one state to another, and that is time, succession. (62)

Echoing Borges’ comment, “Jean Cocteau” is trapped in the present and is incapable of grasping the wholeness (i.e. past, present and future) of his own consciousness.

Another poem by Pacheco, “Lavandería,” also represents the human subject as inescapably divided by time. In this poem, his use of the collective first person pronoun, “nosotros,” expresses the condition as a universal human experience. The poem’s title recalls Cesar Vallejo’s sonnet, “El traje que vestí mañana.” A portion of Pacheco’s text reads: “Cambiamos de siempre / de manera de ser y estar / como mudamos de camisa” (3-5). Recalling Vallejo’s poem, Pacheco uses laundered clothing as a metaphor to express the inconsolable division of human subjectivity. Nevertheless, unlike clothing,

which can be washed, the speaker observes that our past selves, the “otros-yo” (9), cannot be cleansed away. Gradation is present in the tenth line as the past serves as an accumulation of divided selves that weighs people down and prevents them from having a positive interaction with the rest of the world. The string of negative conjunctions in the final two lines (11-12) reinforces the speaker’s sense of despair. However, contrary to the mirror image of “Jean Cocteau,” which at least accompanies the poem’s speaker as a reminder of his mortal existence, the past is gone, irrecoverably, only reinforcing the subject’s sense of division, as he feels emotionally and psychically separated from the type of person that he was years before.

The poem, “Bagatela,” reveals to us that it is our unique personal history that prevents us from having a meaningful correspondence with other human beings. The poet observes: “Para quien no haya visto cuanto yo vi / parecerá mentira lo que pasó ... / No volverá a ser mío lo que perdí” (1-2, 4). As in “Jean Cocteau,” the speaker expresses his divided subjectivity in two ways. He is divided from his past experiences because everything has changed, but he is also estranged from other people because they have not shared the same life experiences as he. The contrasting verbal structures of the poem, which intermingle the past tense with future tense and juxtapose negative declarations with positive affirmations, increase the poet’s sense of temporal and semantic dislocation. For example, the first two lines combine the past and future tense and use both indicative and subjunctive modes. The sensation of dislocation in the first two lines is further accentuated by the use of indefinite qualifiers like “cuanto” (1) and undetermined interrogative pronouns as in “quien” (1). Consequently, the speaker’s despair is clearly

evident. The poem ends with the same two lines as it began, producing no novel or enriching experience in the poet's life.

While poems such as "Bagatela" demonstrate the poet's estrangement from other people, a number of bestiary poems show that human attempts to understand and relate to the animal kingdom are equally fruitless. For example, in "Tres y cinco," the poet observes how a bird lights on his window everyday at the same time each afternoon. A portion of the text reads:

¿Qué busca? Nadie lo sabe.
No alimento: rehúsa
cualquiera migaja.
Ni apareamiento:
está siempre solo. (3-7)

In the third line the speaker attempts to discern the reason for the bird's daily visits. He responds to his own inquiry with a series of negatives responses (3-7), which only reinforce his sense of isolation. In the end, the two fail to communicate. If anything, all they share is a mutual sense of isolation.

Even when people are able to use technology to see the world from different perspectives, we lose the perspective of another viewpoint that becomes irremediably lost to the past. For example, in the prose poem, "Vista de pájaro," the poet points out with astonishment how humans traveling by a balloon may see the world from the same vantage point as birds. In spite of his new vantage point, he also points out that this accomplishment is relative since each new perspective is accomplished by the loss of other novel viewpoints: "En cambio desaparecen otras imágenes de viaje, condenadas a perderse como el vaivén de las diligencias o la calma en altamar cuando las velas languidecían a la espera" (243). The speaker identifies other view points that are slowly

disappearing: the view from a train window at midnight or the sight of a ship as it leaves from the harbor. Therefore, the momentary conquest of seeing from the sky only reinforces the speaker's divided state of subjectivity. He ends the prose poem on a resigned note: "Sensaciones ya casi abolidas que ahora viajan hacia nunca jamás" (243).

Although Desde entonces distinguishes itself from previous works in its resigned look back to the past, we can see how Pacheco repeats many other social, political and philosophical concerns that are constant throughout his poetry. For example, the poet continues to portray the human subject in a conflictive relationship with the other entities of the earth. Notions of perspectivism, which were first expressed in El reposo in poems like "I.11," show how people are mentally separated from each other by their own particular experiences and their own unique points of view. However, contrary to the hermetic speaker of El reposo, the speaker of Desde entonces is much more direct and confessional. For example, in the prose poem, "El adversario," the speaker states in rather blunt terms the abject division that exists between humans: "Nunca sabemos lo que los otros saben de nosotros" (4).

Furthermore, Desde entonces distinguishes itself from previous volumes of poetry like El reposo and No me preguntes by the scarce number of topical references to specific political or historical events. We should remember in both El reposo and No me preguntes a more direct political critique with references to the Spanish Conquest of Mexico (El reposo), North American adventurism (No me preguntes) in Vietnam or the 1968 student massacre at Tlatelolco (No me preguntes). Instead, violence in Desde entonces is presented as omnipresent, an inescapable aspect of life in all cultures and all people. In "Extranjeros," the poet associates this violence with a natural tendency of

people to exclude others who are different from themselves by the way these other people talk or act. He ends the poem warning the reader that if she or he should decide to venture into a neighboring town: “verás cómo tú [“tú,” el lector] también eres extranjero” (7).

Therefore, the resigned tone of Desde entonces is closely related to the poet’s heightened awareness that death and destruction cannot be avoided. He avoids using topical references that might be interpreted along ideological positions (i.e. Marxist, capitalist, pro-Western, or postcolonial, etc.). However, compared to the hermetic poetry of Los elementos and El reposo, the poet is remarkably direct with his ideology throughout Desde entonces. In “Ciudades,” he confidently asserts his position claiming the ubiquity of the destructive forces of the world, observing that all cities are constructed from the remains of death and destruction: “Las ciudades se hicieron de pocas cosas: / madera.../ lodo, piedra, agua, pieles / de las bestias cazadas y devoradas” (1-4). He concludes the poem observing that violence is an inescapable aspect of all societies and, accordingly, all governments: “Toda la ciudad se funda en la violencia / y en el crimen de hermano contra hermano” (5-6). As a consequence, Pacheco’s ideological program continues to echo the construction/destruction dualism that populated much of El reposo. What is new in Desde entonces is the poet’s pervasive sense of resignation and his willingness to state his ideological views in a direct and open manner.

Even if Desde entonces distinguishes itself in its more direct approach to the inevitability of violence and conflict, it also repeats Lacanian notions of subjectivity. More specifically, many poems echo Lacan in representing violence and aggression as a central aspect of our subjective awareness. In addition to the mirror motif, which we

have already seen in the poem, “Jean Cocteau,” Pacheco also employs Lacanian allusions to a primordial wound throughout Desde entonces. Apollon explains that Lacan’s idea of the primordial wound, or scar, is a traumatic experience that each human individual experiences in youth that cannot be expressed through language (104-05). Although Lacan was not the first to use the primordial wound as a symbol for the difficulty of human existence, Lacan’s interpretation is unique in suggesting that the phallus, or linguistic signifier, serves as a substitute for the primordial scar from which all people suffer. Consequently, many poems of Desde entonces, which use the motif of the primordial wound, takes on a Lacanian context by relating the wound to language.

Another poem which uses the motif of the primordial scar is “Manual de Urbanidad.” The poem’s reference to the “dolencia errante agregada” alludes to a primordial scar that affects all humanity. The text reads:

Es decir, soy ciego
a nuestra humana luz compartida.
O bien, no resisto
el peso de otra dolencia errante agregada
a mi invencible pesadumbre. (6-10)

For both Lacan and Pacheco, the wound is not only what separates one from the other, but it is also closely related to the aggression that one person feels toward the other, often leading to an impulse to destroy. Therefore this primordial wound, real or mythic, carries with it an innate sense of violence. In “Indulto” the speaker attributes his desire to kill to his “horda ancestral” (2), a reference which brings to mind Freud’s understanding of violence as emanating from a fundamental desire of people to kill their father. In Totem and Taboo (1912), Freud relays the passage as follows: “one day, the brothers who had been driven out came together, killed and devoured their father and so made an end of

their patriarchal horde” (141). In Pacheco’s poem, which he writes as a prose poem, the protagonist instinctively tries to kill a roach out of some innate sense of fear, but holds back only when his observation of the roach’s fear reminds him of his own mortality:

Derroté el impulso de cazador que me legó la horda ancestral. Vi una cucaracha que, en vez de huir como dicta su especie, me observaba, paralizada de terror. Cuando iba a pisotearla- lo hago siempre- su miedo me detuvo. Dejé que continuara su camino. (235)

The prose poem, “Sáhara,” is key because it more clearly expresses the idea of the wound within a Lacanian context of language. In my opinion, the poem’s reference to “arena tatuada” relates the idea of a primordial wound to the traumatic experience suffered by our acquisition of language. Sand has been a symbol repeatedly used by Pacheco to symbolize language (for example, in “Canción para escribirse en una ola”). The initial paragraph reads:

El desierto es el fondo de un mar ausente. En vez de agua, peces, restos de naufragios y formaciones de coral, sólo arena tatuada y modelada por los vientos. La mayor idea de masa que puede concebir nuestra mente es la pluralidad de sus granos de arena. Se aprietan y se apartan unánimes, cambian de forma flexibles como nubes. (239)

We may also remember from Los elementos (“Éxodo”) how the poet-“náufrago” (5) was called into battle to maintain language at its highest level through poetry. Therefore, as in these other references, the “naufragio” in “Sáhara” alludes to human existence as a shipwreck, in which the ruins are only recoverable through the sand, or language, that marks human life. The desert represents the unconscious, which is made up of the “restos de naufragios,” that is, the bits and pieces of human ancestry that have survived through language.

The second paragraph begins: “Cada uno de ellos contiene en su interior otro desierto, compuesto a su vez de átomos infinitos e invisibles” (239). The poem indicates

that it is through the interaction of each individual sand particle, symbolic of language-bearing humans, that each one develops into its own unique form. However, separately, each particle of sand is divided from the others. Only in their collective “pluralidad de sus granos de arena” is there any sense of wholeness.

In using sand as a metaphor for language, Pacheco counters a logocentric understanding of linguistic signification as fixed and predetermined. Instead, each signifier, or each speaking person for that matter, is only meaningful in its relationship to other signifiers. In the final part of the second paragraph, paradox is present as the dunes (of sand) appear immobile, yet they are also prone to movement. In fact, the shiftiness of the sand is accentuated by Pacheco’s own highly symbolic use of the word, “sand,” which takes on new metaphorical connotations as the poem progresses. For example, in addition to symbolizing the linguistic signifier and language-bearing people, “sand” becomes the human’s mirror image in the desert in the final paragraph of the text. Sand is also “polvo,” the common end to which all elements of the earth must return.

Sand, which has alternately been represented as a signifier, a mirror reflection, or as humus, is also an environmental contaminant; it pollutes and takes over “los imperios” (239) that were built before it. Therefore, the poem hints at how human existence as symbolic, language-bearing beings contributes to the ongoing destruction of the planet. We should recall in poems dating back to El reposo’s “I.2” how Pacheco portrayed words as contaminants in his evolving ecological critique. In other poems such as “Transparencia de las enigmas” and “Job 18,2” of No me preguntes, Pacheco shows how signifiers, associated with modern, technological society, have exacerbated humanity’s divided sense of subjectivity by blurring the difference between reality and fiction. In

other words, the increasing popularity of computers and electronic items is distancing people from the vital elements of the earth: water, plants, animals and even other humans. Rather than interacting with these vital elements, people are spending an increased amount of time with virtual media (television shows, electronic games, computer sources of entertainment). Overwhelmed by the presence of virtual signifiers related to technology, individuals feel increasingly alienated from the natural world around them. Consequently, in “Sáhara,” sand reflects the increased sterility of words which have been neutralized by discourses associated with modern, technological existence.

Furthermore, Pacheco’s use of the desert motif shares affinities with Mexican poet, Octavio Paz. Echoing Paz’s “Himno entre ruinas,” Pacheco portrays the modern poet as composing his texts from the ruins of a wasteland. Like Paz, Pacheco sees these ruins in social, ideological and linguistic contexts. “Sáhara” ends on an apocalyptic note: “[La arena es ...] Recordación de que cuanto empezó en el agua terminará en la aridez que por nuestra locura se está adueñando de la tierra entera.” The enigmatic passage reveals two key points about how language both helps and hinders human beings from resolving the problems of the planet. By including the phrase “por nuestra locura,” Pacheco critiques human (discursive) thought systems for enabling people to threaten the ecological balance of the earth. Therefore, modern language, or verbal pollution, dupes human beings into a false sense of knowledge that blinds them from the environmental problems that they themselves are creating. However, on the other hand, language, ironically, is a “recordación;” a symbolic reminder that allows people to recognize the madness that is causing environmental destruction.

Consequently, in my opinion, “Sáhara” ’s ruminations on language contain a double criticism. The poem foregrounds the alienating effect that electronic signification is having on human subjectivity. In addition, the poem expresses a not so subtle environmental critique against the increased technological advancement of modern society, which at the time of Desde entonces’s publication, was being fueled by the industrialized countries of the West as well as emerging economies such as those of Mexico. By showing the desert creeping into “imperios,” the reader can easily make a connection to the massive destruction of rain forests in the Amazon in South America, which were leaving vast tracts of earth as virtual wastelands. As readers of Pacheco, we also should not forget the poet’s brutal critique of the Spanish Conquest in which he juxtaposed the once vibrant “lake” city of the Aztec nation in El reposo to the polluted, barren city of modern day Mexico City.

By combining his environmental critique with his criticism of modern, technological society, “Sáhara” holds language responsible for failing to provide workable solutions to the major social problems of the world (i.e. environmentalism, militarism, economic domination, inter-human violence). Other poems of Desde entonces also reflect an increasingly hostile attitude toward language. Several poems ridicule the arbitrary and ironic way we invent words to understand the outside world. For example, the short, haiku-like poem, “Nombres,” reads: “El planeta debió llamarse *Mar*: / es más agua que *Tierra*” (1-2).

The poet employs a number of poetic devices that accentuate language’s inability to reflect the outside world. For example, many of the poems of Desde entonces as in “Bagatela” and “Tres y cinco” are structured with rhetorical questions. Nevertheless, the

poet frequently responds to his own questions with ironic conjectures and half-guesses that express little expectation that a definite answer can be obtained. For example, in “Tres y cinco,” the poet asks about the bird that visits him on the patio, responding to his own question inconclusively: “¿Qué busca? Nadie lo sabe” (3). Other poems use qualifiers such as “tal vez,” (“Tres y cinco”) and “parece” (“Multitudes”) that emphasize the speaker’s struggle, and his failure, to understand the world around him.

Even love, which had provided the speaker of Pacheco’s previous works with a transitory sense of relief from a violent world, is mocked. We recall from Los elementos how poems such as “Crecimiento del día” and “Égloga octava” used erotic images to celebrate the temporary union between the poetic speaker and the an anonymous “tú.” In No me preguntes, Pacheco continued to depict the salutary effects of love and eroticism in poems like “Copos de nieve sobre Wivenhoe.” However, in Desde entonces love and passion provide no sense of union. For example, the speaker of “Nupcias” observes how the love experience fails to bring the two lovers together in any significant way:

Quieren [los dos amantes] tener para ser otros,
dos en uno, olvidarse
de que nacieron separados,
morirán separados.
Y sólo por un instante están juntos.
Paz en la Guerra. (3-8)

The fifth and sixth lines emphasize separation as a fundamental state of human existence. Even while engaged in the act of love, people may only temporarily forget that they are essentially divided from the other. Rather than producing a positive experience in the love act, the speaker concludes his narration of the experience with a string of negatives:

Y nadie piense bajo aquellos minutos:
No eres mía, no soy tuyo,
nada nos pertenece, no poseemos

ni siquiera los nombres propios.
Somos hormigas obedientes. (9-13)

Employing asyndeton in lines 10 to 12, each negative sentence reinforces the alienation of the subject. In spite of the experience, the two love partners are essentially alone. Acting out a mandated social order like “hormigas obedientes” (13), the lovers are similar to machines performing a necessary task for the procreation of the species. At best, love may serve as a temporary deception that allows the two subjects to act on impulses that has little to do with any innate attraction between one and another.

In contrast to his previous works, art and poetry also deceive the individual into a false sense of unity with the outside world. For example, he begins “Representaciones” similar to many poems of Los elementos (for example, “Crecimiento del día: 10”), which celebrated the beauty of the poetic moment: “El día se queda inmóvil como un árbol. Se detiene el reloj. El ser de los objetos se perfila. Es como si hubiera ido la luz y no obstante el mundo permaneciera visible” (1-3). However, unlike the magic poems of Los elementos, there is something discordant about the tone of “Representaciones.” Instead of celebrating the poetic experience as a momentary escape from our divided existence, the poetic speaker abruptly turns against his portrayal of the beautiful scene and asks the reader: “¿Qué es la verdad en esta representación solitaria?” (8-9).

The frequent use of similes in Desde entonces also underscores the speaker’s futile attempts to find meaning through poetry. In “La primera canción de Agustín Lara,” the soothing sounds of the night remind the poet of the music of the famed Mexican composer for which the poem is named. The maracas are “como huesos” and the beautiful music allows the poem’s characters to recover their youth: “sonará [la noche] como entonces la blanda música. / Nos recubre esa vida que fue la nuestra” (10-11).

Nevertheless, as in the previous poem, “Representaciones,” “La primera canción” fails to sustain the beautiful moment experienced by the poem’s protagonist. Instead, the speaker accepts with resignation the transitory nature of his experience, acknowledging that he is at the point of death: “Ahora, casi en mi tumba, vuelven / en la canción tristísima. Por un momento / somos de nuevo hermosos amantes” (17-19).

Similarly, Desde entonces regularly employs metaphors as a way to express some sense of unity with the outside world. In “Bosque de marzo,” the speaker describes a vibrant landscape set in springtime. The vibrancy of the scene recalls a prior period, which the speaker identifies as “entonces” (3). Nevertheless, the speaker abruptly interrupts the beautiful description observing that the one who contemplates the scene only gets older. In “Ayer y hoy,” the speaker tries to find correspondences between the things of yesterday and the things of today. However, no correspondences are found. Words of negation that are present throughout Desde entonces intensify the feelings of separation and despair with its hyperbolic repetition of the negative conjunction, “ni”: “Ni la misma casa ni la misma ciudad, ni los mismos amores ni las mismas costumbres, ni los mismos libros ni los mismos amigos. De aquellos tiempos lo único que conservo es mi nombre” (1-3).

In Latin America, the *ultraísta* group, which consisted of a group of Argentine writers including Borges, may come first to mind in our discussion on metaphor. The Ultraísta Manifesto, which was written by Guillermo de Torre under Borges’s influence, stated as the group’s first goal the desire to reduce poetry to its true element: metaphor (64). While Borges would later distance himself from the bold aspirations of the *ultraístas*, metaphor would continue to be a central part of both his poetry and prose. In The Craft

of Verse, a compilation of lectures given by Borges at Harvard from 1968 to 1969, the Argentine poet observed that an almost infinite number of metaphors could be reduced to five or six patterns (41).³⁹ Borges ended his Harvard lecture on metaphor acknowledging thousands of variations were left to be created as well as those which “do not belong, or do not yet belong, to accepted patterns” (41). Since Borges allowed for new patterns of metaphors to be created, the power of the metaphor was not necessarily in the validity of the truth evoked by the metaphor. Instead, he would promote the imaginative and emotional experience created by the metaphorical comparison of two normally disparate objects.

As in Borges, Pacheco is skeptical about the ability of the metaphor to objectively reflect the outside world. Furthermore, recalling the Argentine master, his repetitive use of metaphors and similes do provoke a significant emotional response from the reader. Typically, in traditional poetry, these emotions have often been awe, love, inspiration and sadness. However, the emotion that Pacheco provokes in the reader of Desde entonces is despair: despair about language, despair about human existence, and perhaps, more fundamentally, despair about the failure of human beings to find workable solutions for the problems of the world that they inhabit.

Even while the book’s speaker repeatedly looks to the past for a sense of harmony, he ultimately realizes that the beauty of the past is only an illusion. In “San Cosme, 1854” he discusses an old photo that recaptures the idyllic times of the past. Gardens, fruit trees, fountains and homes existed in places that serve in current times as parking lots. For a moment, the poet sincerely views the past as a simpler, happier existence.

³⁹ In a subsequent conversation with Roberto Alifano, Borges would identify these metaphors as “time and a river; life and dreams; death and sleep; stars and eyes; flowers and women” (40).

Nevertheless, the speaker corrects any nostalgia triggered by the image of the photo by pointing out:

Pero no creas
en la nostalgia inmemorable: debajo
del tibio edén que se detuvo en la imagen
había:
desagüe a la intemperie, miles de esclavos,
seis o siete horas para hacer la comida,
-- y gran dificultad para bañarse. (7-13)

Even though Pacheco's search for utopia in the past fails to produce any enduring explanations regarding the enigma of human existence, his idealization of previous times follows a well established tradition in Western and Latin American poetry, including the poems of Paz and Borges, who remain two key Latin American writers that have impacted Pacheco's poetry.⁴⁰ In fact, in his conversation with Alifano, Borges connects the human quest for utopia to the enigma of time. The Argentine explains that Plato tried to resolve our struggle with time by creating eternity (63). He also points out that Judeo-Christian theology would continue to develop Plato's idea of eternity, depicting Adam and Eve as inhabiting paradise while both speak a primary, Godlike language (63). Furthermore, the early Spanish explorers, such as Colón and Cortés, would record their journey with exaggerations and idealizations of the New World that could easily be associated with Eden. Throughout Desde entonces, Pacheco has sought refuge in the past, in a period which reflects the "eternity" of Plato and the bliss of Eden. Contrasting the violence and conflict that he sees in the present, he identifies the past for its simplicity and wholesomeness. However, these attempts to return to the past repeatedly fail in their attempt to capture any sense of emotional or intellectual satisfaction. Therefore, from my

⁴⁰ In Narradores, Pacheco stated that his admiration of Paz has no end (246). In the same interview, Pacheco remarks that during an early time period in his writing career, his devotion to Borges was so fervent that he committed the error of trying to imitate him" (246).

point of view, the poems of Desde entonces ironically oppose the idea of the past as an idyllic model for solving the problems of modern existence.

The title poem of the book, “Desde entonces,” proposes that the past period of bliss once existed, as in the Garden of Eden, but any clear recollection of this time is impossible:

Hubo una edad (siglos atrás, nadie lo recuerda)
en que estuvimos juntos meses enteros,
desde el amanecer hasta la medianoche.
Hablamos todo lo que había que hablar.
Hicimos todo lo que había que hacer.
Nos llenamos
de plenitudes y fracasos. (1-7)

The Edenic period, whether mythic or real, cannot be explained or recuperated through memory. All that remains of this period is the poet’s vague recollection of togetherness. Pacheco’s use of the first person pronoun, “nosotros,” emphasizes the collective togetherness between people and the other elements of the world. The notion of wholeness is accentuated with words like “todo” (4, 5) and the reflexive verb “nos llenamos” (6).

Nevertheless, the speaker contrasts this previous period of paradise and wholeness to the modern condition of our divided consciousness. The legacy of the past can only be found in a limited vocabulary. Interestingly, each of the words produced by this estrangement (“<<ausencia>>, <<olvido>>, <<desamor>>, <<lejanía>>,” (14)) is placed between quotation marks. By placing the foundational words of a foregone past between quotation marks, the speaker not only emphasizes the existence of these concepts as words (i.e. signifiers, or verbal constructs), but he also reinforces the sensation of division by showing each word’s separation from the others.

At times, the speaker associates the idyllic past with his childhood. Several poems are told from the perspective of the speaker's infancy or youth. "Cocuyos" is a poem that relates the magical experience of a young boy who is experiencing for the first time the enigmatic presence of lightning bugs. While the child attempts to understand the meaning of the experience, his use of metaphor is hyperbolic. He compares the lightning bug to a series of other objects, "estrellas verdes a ras de tierra, / lámparas que se mueven, faros errantes, / hierba que al encenderse levanta el vuelo" (7-9). Yet the fascinating description of the lightning bug is juxtaposed against the competing image of another insect -- that of a dying beetle: "Insecto derrotado sin su esplendor / el aura verde que le confiere la noche; / luz que no existe sin la oscuridad, / estrella herida en la prisión de una mano" (14-17). As the intrusion of the dying beetle contaminates the child's wonderful experience with the firefly, he learns of perhaps the one truth that he cannot avoid: death.

In spite of the despair that radiates throughout Desde entonces, Pacheco continues to elucidate the relationship between violence, language and human subjectivity. Luis Antonio de Villena, who describes Pacheco's social poetry as a move between "la sátira y la ética" (30) sees a continuation of Pacheco's ethical and civic concerns in poems such as "Manual de Urbanidad," "Extranjeros" and the bestiary poem, "Rattus norvegicus" (60, 63). Consistent with Villena, I also view Desde entonces as a continuation of Pacheco's previously voiced ethical concerns. Like Los elementos and El reposo, Pacheco portrays language as inextricably connected to our divided, subjective awareness. In addition, he recalls El reposo by foregrounding language's close relationship to the occurrence of violent acts.

Perhaps in “Fin de siglo” the speaker most clearly expresses his despair about the inability of language-bearing humans to address effectively the social and political woes of our time. Fernando Degiovanni points out the importance of “Fin de siglo,” saying that it coincides “con los límites de su obra y figura la totalidad de su literatura” (140).

Degiovanni elaborates further on the importance of this poem:

habla sobre la justicia y los límites del sujeto: sobre el desencuentro entre saber y poder. Es un poema, en consecuencia, sobre el deseo quebrado o sobre la impotencia del deseo. El referente inmediato de las constataciones, de las preguntas y del espectáculo- las tres dimensiones de su enunciación- es la sangre. (140)

Of importance in Degiovanni’s passage is how the critic alludes to the implicit ideology in Pacheco’s poetry by demonstrating how the “Fin de siglo” connects notions of subjectivity and epistemology to the violence that the poet finds so troubling. Part of Pacheco’s poem is provided below:

*La sangre derramada clama venganza.
Y la venganza no puede engendrar
sino más sangre derramada.
¿Quién soy:
el guarda de mi hermano o aquel a quien adiestraron
para aceptar la muerte de los demás,
no la propia muerte? (1-7)*

As in many poems of Desde entonces, the language used in this one is prosaic. It also invites a discussion with the reader by using a series of rhetorical questions. In addition to expressing the poet’s sense of helplessness toward alleviating violence in the world, the poem is significant in delineating in no uncertain terms the central part of Pacheco’s philosophical predicament. The poem’s initial line restates violence as a fundamental aspect of the universe that shares affinities with one of the key passages from El reposo: “Sangre y odio, la historia” (“II.8”). Neither can the speaker passively stand by and

allow hostilities to occur nor can he condemn others based on the presumed moral righteousness of his own political and philosophical ideology. Language is inescapably complicitous as it is through language that humans form the basis of values through which they judge the rest of the world: “¿A nombre de qué puedo condenar a muerte / a otros por lo que son o piensan?” (7-8). The implications of the poet’s dilemma is revealed in a social and political context: “Pero ¿cómo dejar impunes / la tortura o el genocidio o el matar de hambre?” (9-10). The speaker ends the poem without a clear solution. He acknowledges that what he desires most is a paradox: “sólo anhelo / lo posible imposible: un mundo sin víctimas” (11-12).

While “Fin de siglo” presents one of the most succinct examples of the relationship between language, ideology and violence in Pacheco’s poetry, “Jardín de niños,” a twenty part poem, outlines step-by-step the basic principles that make up Pacheco’s ideology. A notation to the reader indicates that “Jardín de niños” was initially written to accompany a book of illustrations by Mexican artist, Vicente Rojo. By presenting his poems alongside the visual artwork of Rojo, Pacheco not only contests traditional notions of authorship, but he also challenges his readers to ask themselves to what extent image and text work together to communicate meaning.

The basic principles of Pacheco’s discursive ideology are voiced in “Jardín de niños” as follows:

- Even prior to birth, the human condition is represented as one of abandonment and alienation.
- Closely associated with this sense of abandonment, people must struggle against the adversarial forces around them.

- Subjective consciousness is produced through an antagonistic interaction of the self with the outside world.
- Language deludes the individual into a false sense of seeing both himself and the outside world. Therefore, his seemingly unified, subjective consciousness inevitably leads to conflict as he imposes his own ideology on the other entities of the earth.
- At a collective level of society, the world's social problems (war, famine, environmental destruction, etc.) are largely a product of this struggle between the members of the planet. Language is complicit in deceiving the human individual into thinking that his or her ideology accurately reflects an underlying truth about his or her relationship with the outside world.

Michael Doudoroff emphasizes the importance of “Jardín de niños,” writing “los poemas [de “Jardín de niños”] me parecen de una fuerza extraordinaria, una declaración sobresaliente de la conciencia y el temple de una generación” (161). Consistent with the tone of the rest of the Desde entonces, the title, “Jardín de niños,” which also means “kindergarten” in Spanish, is ironic. In this poem youth is anything but a garden. Pacheco initially casts the young human protagonist as a protozoan-like fetus struggling to survive while in the womb of its mother. Initially compared to a one-celled protozoan, then a fish (“1” 4) due to the fetus’ ability to breathe in amniotic liquid, he later develops into a “reptil pulmonado” (“1” 9). In spite of these transformations, his survival is ultimately determined by chance. The speaker asks: “¿Voy a tocar el fondo como una piedra / o flotaré como un anfibio en las ondas?” (“3” 4-5). Through luck the developing fetus survives. Even after birth, the child still has not developed subjective consciousness

and exists as “el gran no-yo” (14) and “sin palabras” (“4” 17). However, the infant’s existence continues to be defined by its sense of alienation:

Ser a solas,
indefenso ante el mundo, el gran no-yo
y su despliegue amenazante
sobre, en torno
del que ha nacido sin palabras. (“4” 13-17)

Once again, the isolation experienced by the fetus in the passage above reminds the reader of Lacan, who understood alienation as an “essential constitutive feature of the [human] subject” (Evans 9). The ninth poem more clearly recalls Lacan by showing the individual’s consciousness of self as a distinct entity initiated upon seeing his reflection in the mirror.

Narciso en el estanque: hay un espejo
donde se abisma el que se reconoce.
Quien como yo,
supone el niño el observar la ficción
hecha de luz contra telones de azogue. (1-5)

By referring to the subject as a type of Narcissus, the poet not only alludes to the well known Greek myth, but also Lacan. For Lacan, narcissism has both an erotic and an aggressive character (Evans 120). As in Lacan, the narcissistic attraction in “Jardín de niños” produces both love of self and aggression toward the outside world. In this key poem of “Jardín de niños,” Pacheco demonstrates how the subject’s own antagonistic reaction to his self image ultimately manifests itself in an oppressive act against the other entities of the earth: “tirano incapaz de ver / más allá de su ombligo mínimo” (“9” 8-9).

In the wake of viewing his mirror image, the poem’s subject enters into language: “Pero el niño reinventa las palabras / y todo adquiere un nombre” (“13” 1-2). The use of the prefix, “re,” emphasizes that the poet is not inventing anything new, but recycling a

text that had existed before. In addition, these “nombres” are not perfect correspondences with the outside world that they imitate. Language serves two opposing functions: “la revelación... [y el] encubrimiento” (“13” 5). In other words, by naming the items that exist in the outside world, the individual begins to categorize outside reality in ways that will covertly reflect his own subjective desires and prejudices. For example, in addition to signifying a domesticated, hooved animal, a word like “horse” may constitute meaning in the way that it serves the human’s subjective desires as a mode of transportation or as a work animal. Consequently, his biases and desires will hide beneath the apparently neutral and linguistically arbitrary (per Sausure) terms with which he chooses to understand the world.

The fifteenth poem expands the poet’s investigations into the epistemological limits of language. The speaker uses the parable of a house to serve as an archive of knowledge and information that calls to mind Borges’ “Biblioteca de Babel.” By placing certain key words in the poem in upper case letters, Pacheco emphasizes fundamental relationships between the house, “LA CASA,” and the human subject, “El NIÑO:”

El NIÑO rompe todas las cosas de LA CASA.
Quiere adueñarse de LA CASA.
Rompe todo lo viejo que hay en LA CASA.
EL NIÑO representa LA VIDA nueva.
LA VIDA nueva está condenada a hacerse LA VIDA vieja.
Un día será como las cosas viejas que hay en LA CASA. (1-6)

If taken literally, it can depict the limited perspective of a child; the style imitates this; at the end, the poem incorporates a mature perspective. However, when read metapoetically, we recognize how Pacheco’s parable uses the “cosas de la CASA” (1) to symbolize “words” or “texts” maintained in a common holding place that is reminiscent of a library or an archive. Recalling the intertextual experiments of No me preguntes, the

passage suggests that texts preexist the author's composition of the poem or book.

Therefore, the passage repeats the notion, already established in No me preguntes, that the author is a scribe, a manipulator of previous texts.

In addition to challenging traditional notions of the author as a unique creator of an original work, the passage also reveals that textual production, or rearrangement, is inherently a violent process. Paralleling the elements of the outside world, which exist in a state of tension with each other, interacting with other elements, consuming them and being consumed, textual production is also an appropriation of other texts. The poet's choice of vocabulary accentuates this process as a hostile act: "El NIÑO rompe.../ Quiere adueñarse de LA CASA" (1-2). The old things, which the child wishes to destroy, could symbolize the texts and ideologies of other human beings that are consciously or unconsciously in confrontation with his own. Therefore, language serves as a primary medium that affects and influences the values of the community. Consequently, the members of the community will vie to impose their own ideologies on the belief systems of their rivals. Language becomes a symbolic battlefield of competing ideologies that ultimately seek preemptive ownership of the laws and conventions that determine the behavioral norms and ways of the community.

Language also fails to provide any significant solutions for the problems of modern society. The poet concludes the eighteenth poem without a clear revolutionary program to stop the violence around him. The speaker observes:

No obstante,
prosigue la gran matanza.
Se extiende el hambre.
En el sur de América
hay campos de tortura, inmensas fosas
se abren en nuestra tierra como en Auschwitz. ("18" 3-8)

The passage is significant because it reveals the social and political consequences related to the failure of people, as language-bearing beings, to stop violence. In this passage, the consequences are specifically linked to the abject hunger and political killings that have marked the history of Latin America as well as many of other countries.

In the nineteenth poem, the speaker links his previous references to torture to the limitations of epistemology. He has failed to provide definitive answers for humanity's problems and he recognizes that his existence as a speaking being does not allow him to see outside of the linguistic system from which he speaks. The speaker observes: "Nosotros / estamos ciegos para ver más allá del gran vidrio" ("19" 3-4). The image of the wasteland returns, recalling the poem, "Sáhara." He concludes the final lines of "Jardín de niños" as follows:

Es preciso
atravesarlo [el desierto] de sol a sol. Llegaremos
al otro mar a que nos cubra la muerte.
Entretanto el camino es la meta y nadie avanza solo
y el agua se comparte o revientas. No hay minuto que no transcurra. Adelante.
("20" 7-9)

He is unable to find a utopia in the past and is inevitably trapped in the present, which he represents as a daily passage through the desert. By instructing the reader to move forward with "Adelante," he rejects any nostalgic return to past. However, his use of the first person pronoun, "nosotros," and his passage "nadie avanza solo" (8) emphasize that humans maintain a collective stake in the earth with the planet's other members, and that we are all collectively responsible for its future preservation.

Therefore, as in most of the poems of Desde entonces, "Jardín de niños" ends on a resigned note. The poet's attempts to find a more harmonious existence in the childhood

experience have failed, and he is forced to accept the inescapability of violence and conflict. The despair of the speaker of Desde entonces parallels ideas expressed in Norbert Lechner's article, "A Disenchantment Called Postmodernism." Like Desde entonces, Pacheco portrays human beings as increasingly alienated from one other in a progressively technological society. However, Lechner sees in this very disenchantment a means to form a sense of unity. Lechner observes:

There have always been periods of certainty and periods of disenchantment; in a sense, there can only be disenchantment where there are illusions. One speaks, for example, of an excess of expectations that democracy cannot fulfill. But more than an excess, what seems to be involved is a change of the subjectivity invested in politics. In my opinion, so-called postmodernity is above all disenchantment with modernity, a modernity, that, in turn, Max Weber defined as a "disenchantment of the world." That is to say, it entails a kind of "disenchantment with disenchantment"- a paradoxical formula that reminds us that disenchantment is more than a loss of illusions, a reinterpretation of desires. As such, this disenchantment called postmodernity could be a point of departure for rethinking politics in Latin America" (148).

Consistent with Lechner, the speaker of Desde entonces is obsessively involved with finding a solution for the social and political maladies that have plagued Latin America and the world at large. Neither Pacheco nor Lechner propose detailed solutions for humanity, but both recognize human limitations as a necessary starting point to affect change. Although neither delineates an ideological program for change, both use disillusionment as a basis from which people may collectively address the problems besetting mankind.

Therefore, Desde entonces carries on Pacheco's ideological program by repeating many previous literary strategies and motifs that foreground language's role in mediating the conflictive relationship between people and the rest of the world. For example, as in Los elementos and El reposo, the poet uses Lacanian references to human subjectivity.

As in No me preguntes, he employs intertextual strategies and bestiaries that point out the significant social and political implications associated with a unified, authoritative speaker. Aware that these literary strategies will not alone significantly alter the violence that pervades the universe, the speaker desperately looks to the past for an example of a more peaceful existence. However, the past also fails to provide any examples of a lasting peace. Therefore, while Desde entonces advances an ideology already expressed in Pacheco's previous works, the book distinguishes itself in the despair and resignation that permeate the its pages. Lacking other alternatives for a more harmonious existence, the speaker acknowledges his own futility as a common basis from which people may direct their lives. Although the poet will continue to accept futility as an inevitable aspect of human existence, we will examine the poet's exploration of art and myth as an antidote to human resignation in our analysis of Pacheco's tenth book of poems, El silencio de la luna (1994).

CHAPTER V

REJECTING THE TYRANNY OF LANGUAGE: SEARCHING FOR A NEW DISCOURSE THROUGH POETRY AND FICTION

El silencio de la luna (1994) distinguishes itself from Pacheco's previous books in its outspoken promotion of poetry and fiction as an alternative to traditional modes of discourse. According to the speaker of El silencio, these traditional discourses, which the speaker associates with orthodox religion, politics and capitalism, contribute to the social and political problems of society by imposing autocratic rules of behavior on the voiceless members of society. Ultimately, these discourses may manifest themselves as social aggressions in the form of political and economic tyranny, environmental abuse and misogyny. Even though the speaker of El silencio recognizes that violence and conflict are unavoidable and even necessary for the perpetuation of the universe, he privileges poetry and fiction as a means to restore a more harmonious relationship between people and the other members of the world community.

The written and unwritten rules of a community inevitably represent the values and interests of an empowered minority against the general public, who have little or no recourse to institutional mechanisms, such as the national press, local or national government officials, or society's economic leaders and business owners, to express their views in any meaningful way. These voiceless members of society may be human such as the poor, the underclass, or ethnic minority groups. They may also be non-human

such as animals, plants and the other organic and inorganic entities that comprise the environment. Therefore, throughout El silencio, Pacheco calls into question the institutional organizations of a community (i.e. the press, the Church, the economic infrastructure, and the government) that shape the norms and customs for the rest of society and affect the biota.

In this chapter, I will reveal how Pacheco continues to advance an ideology by demonstrating how the empowered groups of society attempt to legitimize legal, religious and economic discourse in ways that subtly hide their own egoist desires for self-advancement (i.e. the attainment of positions of power, money, influence, etc.). From the perspective of the speaker of El silencio, all discourses fail to reveal the infinite complexity of the universe and all ultimately fail to provide enduring solutions for the world's fundamental problems (violence, economic and environmental exploitation, etc.). As a result, the speaker foregrounds how our ignorance will become the guiding light for people to live in a more intimate relationship with the other members of the planet. He offers poetry and fiction as an alternative discourse that celebrates the realm of the universe which remains unknown and undefined by humans, as a way to reengage symbolically with the rest of the world's entities.

The title of the book, El silencio de la luna, demonstrates the importance that mystery will have in helping people live in a more harmonious way. The phrase, “el silencio de la luna,” is taken from the The Aeneid, as we learn from reading a selected passage from Virgil in an epigraph included in the title poem of the book. The text addresses the episode in which the Greek troops surreptitiously return to Troy in their ships, under “el silencio de la luna.” The passage recognizes the threatening aspects of the unknown,

such as the Greek invasion of Troy by stealth, but it also shows how the representation of life's mysteries in art can be a beautiful source of wonder and inspiration. The "silencio de la luna" will be the driving force throughout El silencio that encourages the reader to experience life as a beautiful voyage into the unknown, full of perils but also triumphs. Therefore, throughout El silencio, the idea of mystery is associated with those aspects of the universe that lie outside the domain of knowledge.

All five sections of El silencio repeat many of the key philosophical concepts and literary strategies that were common in Pacheco's previous works.⁴¹ For example, the title of the first section, "Ley de extranjería," signals the poet's continued interest in the enduring conflict between the self and the other. The title poem of El silencio's second section, "A largo plazo," reiterates the poet's interest in time, emphasizing the way that the visible effects of conflict (between the earth's physical elements, between human individuals, etc.) often manifest themselves only after extended periods of attrition. Similarly, the title poem of the third section, "Sobre las olas," employs oceanic imagery that recalls Los elementos (1963).

El silencio's first poem, "Prehistoria" is remarkable in the way that it demonstrates in an open, frank manner language's key role in perpetuating the social problems of the world. The poem is divided into four parts. The initial verses of the poem read:

En las paredes de esta cueva
pinto el venado
para adueñarme de su carne,
para ser él,
para que su fuerza y su ligereza sean más ("1" 1-5).

⁴¹ The first edition of El silencio de la luna was published in 1992 with four sections. The fifth section, entitled "El aire oscuro," was initially published as part of a book of illustrations by Mexican artist, Vicente Rojo. These poems have been included as the fifth section of El silencio, when the book included in his anthology, Tarde o temprano: poemas 1958-2000.

The poem, which is narrated in the first person, is told from the perspective of a primitive human being, who draws a picture of a deer on the cave wall. However, the picture of the deer is anything but innocent. The anaphora in verses 3, 4 and 5 underscore the power relations implicit in his illustration of the primitive person's first symbols. For example, the sign of the deer represents the individual's desire to appropriate for himself the deer's special skills for survival as much as it represents the notion of the deer as a unique species of the animal kingdom.

Therefore, Pacheco's verse hints at a magical perspective emerging in the human being. According to anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, magic originated as part of a human need to manipulate the forces of nature and to appease our needs for security. In Magic, Science and Religion, he writes: "Magic is thus not derived from an observation of nature or knowledge of its laws, it is a primeval possession of man to be known only through tradition and affirming man's autonomous power of creating desired ends" (56). Malinowski saw magic as a natural byproduct of a human response to uncertainty. He explains: "We do not find magic wherever the pursuit is certain, reliable, and well under the control of rational methods and technological processes. Further, we find magic where the element of danger is conspicuous" (116). Pacheco reflects Malinowski's views on magic by showing how the deer represents the human's desire for certain, special qualities in the deer. For example, by drawing the deer, the person might magically acquire the strength and fleet-footedness of the deer so that he can better protect himself against his own perceived predators.

In writing about the deer image as a symbol of the individual's desire for protection, Pacheco promotes an ideology that problematizes art and language's complicity in

perpetuating the violence in the universe in ways that date back to his first book, Los elementos de la noche. However, the tone of El silencio's poems is significantly different from the hermetic voice of Los elementos. Unlike the poems of Los elementos, the speaker of "Prehistoria" is increasingly direct about the way that language serves as a medium through which the "yo" advances his own interests. In fact, "Prehistoria" 's speaker delineates step-by-step the close relationship between language and violence. For example, the speaker's own egoistic understanding of his relationship to the world becomes expressed in increasingly sophisticated situations that suggest language's complicity in constructing subjective thought systems throughout human civilization. As a primitive being, the human subject develops a concept of God, which he imposes on the other people of his community: "Invento a Dios, / a semejanza del Gran Padre que anhelo ser / con poder absoluto sobre la tribu" (Tarde vv. 10-12).

It is clear that Pacheco wishes to relate this egoistic concept of God to the linguistic ability of people because, in the subsequent verses of "Prehistoria," Pacheco demonstrates how the speaker's subjective concept of truth ultimately reveals itself in the social laws and norms that he imposes on the rest of society:

Gracias a ti, alfabeto hecho por mi mano,
habrá un solo Dios: el mío.
Y no tolerará otras deidades
Una sola verdad: la mía.
Y quien se oponga a ella recibirá su castigo ("1" 18-22)

The use of the first person possessive pronouns, "mía," "mi ley" emphasizes the not so subtle power that discourses have when disguised as the collective laws and norms of society. Empowered by the perceived "legitimacy" of his newly created law, the speaker

establishes hierarchies of right or wrong through which he will prevent others who might challenge his authority.

Just as the notion, “God,” is a verbal construct symbolizing what the individual aspires to be, the speaker constructs notions of the Devil to protect himself against those undetermined forces that threaten his existence:

A la parte de mí que me da miedo
la llamaré Demonio.
¿O es el doble de Dios, su inmensa sombra?
Porque sin el dolor y sin el mal
no existirían el bien ni el placer,
del mismo modo que para la luz
son necesarias las tinieblas. (“2” 20-26)

While God represents the images of omnipotence and eternity to which the human speaker aspires, the devil symbolizes the threat to the person’s aspirations for dominance and immortality. Therefore, the concepts God and the Devil have no existence as true ontological entities. Instead, they exist as verbal constructs that will become the basis of a moral code to enforce the individual’s own subjective understanding of the world. In addition, the passage counters traditional notions of morality that propose clear interpretations of good and evil. For example, verses 23 to 26 show the presence of evil as part of a natural process that is necessary for those things, which people have deemed good to exist.

The third part of “Prehistoria” shows more clearly how the individual’s notions of good and evil operate to the detriment of the non-speaking members of society. In this part, the animal kingdom becomes the unwitting victim of the speaker’s desire to conquer his perceived enemies. After killing a mammoth, the speaker celebrates his slaughter of

the creature from an anthropocentric perspective: “Escuchen cómo suena nuestro grito de triunfo” (“3” 23).

Unlike the first two parts of “Prehistoria,” we begin to hear a second poetic voice that questions the anthropocentrism of the poem’s speaker. Instead of seeing the event as a triumph, the second voice foregrounds the devastation of man’s “conquest:” “Qué lástima. / Ya se acabaron los gigantes. / Nunca habrá otro mamut sobre la tierra.” (24-26). By representing the two voices, Pacheco again challenges notions of a unified subjectivity. He presents one voice, a primary voice, that advances the individual’s own desire to control, but he also exhibits a secondary voice that self-reflexively questions the social and philosophical consequences of his own actions.

While the third part of “Prehistoria” demonstrates how language is complicitous in the human being’s exploitation of the animal world, the fourth and final part shows how men, acting out their fears of their own patriarchal submission, have used language to justify their oppression of women. The poem’s speaker is now clearly gendered as a male. The poem begins: “Mujer, no eres como yo,” a tribute to one of Mexico’s greatest writers and thinkers, Rosario Castellanos, who has been acknowledged for her outspoken support for women’s rights and women’s causes.⁴² The speaker in Pacheco’s poem addresses his female counterpart in the following passage:

Y como representas [“tú,” o la mujer] la mitad que no tengo
y te envidio el poder de construir la vida en tu cuerpo,
diré: nació de mí, fue un desprendimiento:
debe quedar atada por un cordón umbilical invisible.
Tu fuerza me da miedo.
Debo someterte
como a las fieras tan temidas de ayer. (“4” 6-12)

⁴² The verse by Pacheco recalls a famous poem by Castellanos, “Poesía, no eres tú.” The poem is included in an anthology of her complete poetic works, also titled *Poesía, no eres tú* (1972).

One of the interesting features of this passage is how the woman's child-bearing ability is not necessarily viewed as a life creating attribute, but as an invasive force that threatens the male, for he envies her reproductive ability. Because he fails to understand her unique qualities, the man views his female counterpart as a rival and looks for ways to subjugate her power.

Just as the gendered "male" subject has constructed notions of the devil based on his fears of persecution, the poem emphasizes how men have used language to control and oppress women: "diré: nació de mí, fue un desprendimiento: / debe quedar atada por un cordón umbilical invisible. (7-8). In this reference, the speaker refers to the Biblical passage in Genesis 2:21 that describes how Eve was made from Adam's rib. However, instead of supporting the authenticity of the Holy Scriptures, he exposes the underlying, patriarchal foundation of the Biblical passage by showing how the Church has used official discourse to impose a patriarchal sense of male superiority on women.

He ends his commentary in "Prehistoria" by allowing the reader to choose between two mythological versions of women: "Eva o Lilit: / Escoge pues entre la tarde y la noche" ("4" 1-2). The two myths, of course, relate to Biblical exegesis. Eve represents traditional Biblical discourse, where the woman, except when she takes the fruit from the tree of knowledge, acts in a subservient position to man. In Pacheco's poem she also serves as a "reposo" (4) a stillness, that recalls the poet's second book, El reposo del fuego. Her role is functional: she is useful for reproducing the species and provides a measured sense of pleasure. By being visible like the light of the afternoon, Eve's place is also understood by the male. The dialectical opposite of Eve is Lilith. Lilith is the apocryphal first wife of Adam, who refused to submit to Adam's control. According to

the Alphabet of Ben-Sira (800?-1000? AD), she left Adam and forsook God in order to become the mother of a demonic race (Lindahl 598). In Pacheco's poem, the speaker portrays Lilith as a mysterious force, as perpetual change, and as the night with its sexual pleasure. Consequently, Lilith represents the realm of knowledge that may not be fully reducible to language nor fully understood by the male. From this perspective, Lilith symbolizes the enigmas of life that the individual, male or female, may never completely comprehend.

Therefore, "Prehistoria" delineates in direct terms the way in which language helps shape two alternative discourses. One form of discourse, associated with Eve, establishes definitive and rigid constructs of good and evil. Typically, this discourse is presented as a type of indisputable truth, such as the laws of society or Biblical scripture, which hides the egoistic desires of the group of people who were empowered to create them. The victims become those without a voice: animals, women and the environment. The other type of discourse, reflective of Lilith, is that which acknowledges the shortcomings of all (discursive) ideologies. In other words, Lilith, unlike Eve, refuses to subordinate herself to the autocratic rule of Adam, and instead chooses a path that substitutes the undefined, magical realm of life, "el imán, el abismo, la hoguera" (28)," for the rigid absolutism of Adam's world. Consequently, by following the example of Lilith, the individual accepts a certain amount of semantic flexibility and embraces openness and ambiguity as an alternative form of consciousness.

Pacheco's investigation into the relationship between language and mystery recalls the works of Argentine writer, Julio Cortázar. One of Cortázar's critics, Jaime Alazraki, associates realism with traditional language in its assumption that the outside world can

be represented by language. According to Alazraki, Cortázar views fiction as an alternative to traditional language. The critic makes the following observations on Cortázar's writing:

Since his beginning as a writer, he [Cortázar] distrusted realism. He felt that realism and reality had little to do with each other. Realism had to do with convention, with an accepted code that acted as a surrogate of reality. One may say that all art forms are conventions seeking to represent reality; realism, on the other hand, posed as the embodiment of reality... Fiction speaks where language [like realism] remains silent. Furthermore, fiction dares to enter that region which is out of language's reach: a space irreducible to physical scales, a time outside the clock's domain, emotions not yet recorded in psychological manuals. (95)

By offering the reader a choice between two mythological versions, Pacheco echoes Cortázar by implicitly rejecting truth narratives associated with traditional discourses such as realism. In "Prehistoria," Pacheco is asking the reader: "Should people follow a discourse similar to religious, economic or legalistic dogma that makes pretensions to truth, or should humans follow a discourse that stresses semantic and epistemological flexibility and polysemia?" That is, the speaker is suggesting that in a world with no absolutes, all people are bound to live according to some type of myth. Myth may be represented through the life of Eve, that is, submission to a rigid type of knowledge (associated with exactitude and submission to an absolute truth, which is most closely represented by religious, mathematical, governmental laws and institutions and even scientific discourses). From the opposite perspective, the myth of Lilith comes closest to representing a style of life most closely embodied by art and fiction. Although the poem's speaker allows the reader to choose, it is clear that his sympathies are on the side of the Lilith in promoting art and fiction as a primary basis from which people may experience life. As a result, "Prehistoria" foregrounds the social and political implications associated with both forms of mythological discourse.

Other poems of El silencio reinforce these distinctions between the two types of discourse. For example, “Friso de la batalla,” demonstrates in brutally frank terms how the individual uses discourse to impose his will on the other. In the poem, the victim is forced to declare his total submission to the aggressor. The vanquished concedes:

Me doy, grita el vencido.
Es decir: te pertenezco, renuncio
a mi identidad y a mi dignidad,
a mi condición humana. Desciendo
a res (en español y latín): bestia, cosa,
animal que puedes uncir al yugo
o bien sacrificarlo en el altar de tu triunfo” (1-7).

The poem’s title refers to a character in Pedro Calderón de la Barca’s drama, La hija del aire. In this play, Friso was a jingoist general who allied himself with the bellicose Semíramis in her merciless quest for royal power. Using anaphora in verses three, four and five, the poet accentuates the victim’s humiliation at the hands of the aggressor. The poem emphasizes the way the ambitious quest for power and control by a few individuals tends to force the total, dehumanizing subjugation of their opponents to their mercy.

On the other hand, many other poems of El silencio promote the second type of discourse that allows individuals to embrace mystery, exception and difference as a positive source of wonder and adventure. In the poem, “Ovnividente,” the poet recounts a sighting of a UFO in Brooklyn in 1937 using the first person pronoun. Even though Pacheco was not born until 1939, the poem’s narrator speaks as if he were there. While the speaker points out that there were no official confirmations of the UFO, it was real to the thousands who saw it. He concludes: “Algo se hizo presente en Brooklyn Heights, / donde noche tras noche sin fallar nunca / suceden cosas muy extrañas” (Tarde 422, v. 23-25). In poems such as “Ovnividente,” we can see how Pacheco promotes the search for

the fantastic both as a way of writing, but also as a way of leading one's life. In other words, the poet acknowledges that the enigmas of life are what make human experience valuable. He seeks a type of writing that helps capture the wonder and joy of these experiences. However, he also implicitly criticizes those individuals who would use a fantastic experience, like the sighting of a UFO, as a way to subordinate the will of the general public to the subjective desires of a few through the use of organized beliefs.

Although "Prehistoria," "Friso," and "Ovnividente" speak with a directness that was not present in Pacheco's earliest volumes of poems, some poems of El silencio use hermetic language, oceanic imagery and Lacanian-like motifs that remind the reader of his early, hermetic books such as Los elementos. For example, the poem, "Sobre las olas," represents the ocean as an untamable force existing in a perpetual state of tension. The poet personifies the sea in a way that calls to mind the poem, "Canción para escribirse en una ola," of Los elementos. It is full of "odio," (15) "cólera" (15) and "rabia" (17). When read from a metapoetic perspective, "Sobre las olas" also alludes to Lacanian ideas in its depiction of the sea as the inaccessible realm of the unconscious where linguistic signification occurs.

Perhaps, most importantly, the poem parallels Lacanian thought by showing how language produces a state of separation between the human individual and the outside world.⁴³ Using terminology that recalls the poem, "Árbol entre dos muros" of Los elementos, trees act like signifiers forging gaps in the subjective consciousness of the individual: "Como astillas volaban los grandes árboles: / guerra sin esperanza de armisticio" (Tarde 443-44, v. 22). By relating linguistic signification to "astillas" (22),

⁴³ Lacan represented the notion of the gap from several different perspectives, but one of the primary perspectives is the subject's sense of division between his conscious self and the unconscious self where linguistic signification actually occurs.

“Sobre las olas” links the idea of mystery (i.e., the unknown) to Lacan’s idea of the phallus. In other words, the phallus, or the transcendental signifier, takes the place of the void experienced by the individual during the mirror stage. For Lacan, the notion of the gap is also the “mysterious, inexplicable gap between cause and effect” (Evans 71). Pacheco echoes Lacan by demonstrating how people interpret their separation from the other as a type of mysterious, threatening force that they cannot fully comprehend. The poem’s speaker concludes: “Desde el fondo de la prisión / nos observan sus ojos de pantera” (30-31). In this passage, the poet associates the “ojos de pantera” with the “fondo de la prisión,” suggesting that humans interpret those things that they fail to understand as a threat to their existence. Consequently, not only does the poem evoke Lacanian notions of our divided subjectivity, but it also links this division to an innate perception of attack from the outside world. When read alongside poems such as “Prehistoria,” we can see how people unconsciously develop laws and conventions as a defense mechanism against an outside world that they do not fully comprehend.

Other poems of El silencio more clearly demonstrate how discourse is organized and controlled by society’s institutions. Therefore, in these pages, discourse does not only represent the actual words or phrases exchanged between people, but it also includes all the symbols, norms and conventions that influence how humans lead their daily lives in a social context. These institutions may be the country’s predominant religious organizations, its governing bodies, or the organizations making up the country’s economic infrastructure. Furthermore, these poems help reveal how these institutions, by presenting their discourses as morally “good,” fail to disclose the subjective desires (for control, power, money, etc.) of the privileged few that helped create them. For, example,

“El gran inquisidor,” recalls how the Spanish monarchy and Church punished those citizens who espoused ideas in opposition to their own Catholic doctrine. The text reads:

Señor, guarde silencio o le cerramos la boca
de un latigazo.
Se la inutilizaremos bajo el hierro candente.
Con las tenazas de la Ley retorceremos su lengua.” (1-4).

The emphasis on the word, “Ley” (4) written in upper case letters, underscores the heightened force of the word, which has been legitimized by the country’s legal institutions. Governments may now use their perceived legitimacy to justify repressive actions against their opponents. The reference to “tenazas” (4), a preferred instrument of torture used during the Inquisition (Held 126), gives special emphasis to the brutality of the Inquisitorial period. According to Held, the “tenazas,” or tongs, were often used to rip off various body parts of the victim. Ironically, Pacheco personifies “Ley” as a weapon with “tenazas,” while, through the use of metonymy, he relates both “boca” (1) and “lengua” (4) to speech. By employing poetic strategies that connect word (i.e. “law”) to weapon and body to speech, Pacheco highlights the intimate relationship between institutional discourse and the occurrence of violence and oppression committed in the name of the law and religious fanaticism.

Even though the Spanish Inquisition officially ended in 1834 under Queen Isabel II, the poem’s speaker intermingles past references with present terminology that invites the reader to ask himself or herself to what extent inquisitorial forces are still present today.⁴⁴ For example, the protagonist of “El gran inquisidor” warns the prisoner: “No me venga con cuentos de derechos humanos. / Usted ya no es humano: es el enemigo” (30-

⁴⁴ While the Spanish Inquisition officially ended earlier in many Latin American countries, which began obtaining independence from the Spanish monarchy in 1809, arguably the struggle for free speech has continued into the present era in many Latin American countries as well as in a number of other countries in the world.

31). By referring to “derechos humanos” (31), the poet is addressing the repeated human rights violations by totalitarian governments in the modern era. He concludes the poem with: “Dentro de unos instantes ofrendaremos su cuerpo / en el altar del Bien, la Bondad y el Orden Fraternal.” (33-34). The “Ley,” now consecrated by the Church as the “Bien, la Bondad y el Orden Fraternal” (34), provides a chillingly ironic representation of the Eucharist by demonstrating how oppressors use the discourse of the Church and State to justify the abuse of its citizens.

“Mercado libre” is another poem that uses anachronisms to critique the institutional control of discourse in the modern era. In this poem, the speaker criticizes the institutions associated with capitalism such as multinational corporations. The text follows:

Siempre que lo equiparon al sultán en su harén,
cuando envidian
su ilimitada cópula diversa,
.....
el gallo piensa en nuestra hirsuta arrogancia:
creer que él no lo sabe, no está consciente
de su lugar de peón en el siniestro ajedrez,
simple engranaje en la cadena infinita
que proporciona huevos para el desayuno

y Kentucky Fried Chicken. (1-3, 7-12)

In the first verse, the poet juxtaposes the anachronism, “sultán” (1) against terminology reminiscent of that of a chicken farm. In addition, the poet also ends the poem with a reference to Kentucky Fried Chicken. His specific inclusion of this company, known for its strong international presence in more than 80 countries worldwide, suggests that he wishes to direct his commentary in a contemporary context regarding transnational capitalism. Furthermore, by personifying the rooster’s participation with

the corporate endeavors of Kentucky Fried Chicken, the poem takes on the allegorical qualities of a bestiary.

In fact, our analysis of the poem points out that Pacheco is challenging the idea of a free market by highlighting how many of the fundamental decisions of the fast food chain are controlled by a small minority of scarcely visible corporate management. Ironically, there is no specific mention of the chicken farm's North American managers. For example, in the first verse, the poet uses the anonymous third person plural pronoun to signal how "they," presumably the restaurant's corporate management, delegates a limited sense of responsibility through titular labels like "sultán" (1). The managers envy the rooster for abilities that they themselves may lack. The rooster is strong and virile and rules over his harem with authoritarian rule. However, in spite of his exalted position as "sultan," the rooster marvels at how his superiors fail to see his own hatred of them.

Furthermore, by expressing his commentary in the form of a bestiary, the reader is forced to question whether the sultan's "harén" (1) symbolizes the mass produced chickens of the restaurant chain or the company's human laborers. Consequently, the poem achieves a dual critique. It critiques the mechanistic "enslavement" and slaughter of millions of chickens, but also implicitly asks to what extent people, many of whom work for near minimum wage salaries for corporations such as Kentucky Fried Chicken, are also part of the "engranaje en la cadena" (11). By giving voice to the "voiceless" animals and human laborers used by corporations, Pacheco challenges the reader to consider whether the views of these participants are fairly represented in the free market.

Although it is clear that poems like "Mercado libre" advance an ideology by foregrounding the way that global corporations control economic discourse and lives,

they reveal a sharp departure from what has generally been associated with social protest poetry. In Mexican letters, Efraín Huerta comes to mind as Mexico's most successful, socially committed poet (Dauster 59). An avowed Marxist, Huerta provides a good point of contrast to the social concerns expressed in Pacheco's poetry. Written in 1969, the following poem by Huerta also makes a critique of North American, capitalist domination:

Hotel El Colony
(Isla de Pinos)

Los siniestros tycoons con cara de zapato pecoso
lo planearon y construyeron para su alcohólico week-end
Costó una escamita de la serpiente Wall Street
Habían de llegar los ventrudos los dispépticos
los ulcerosos los sicópatas los artríticos (Poesía completa 317 1-5)

The reference to Isla de Pinos relates to an island in Cuba's archipelago, which was renamed in 1978, Isla de Juventud. In reading Huerta's poem, we can observe several similarities with Pacheco's "Mercado libre." The anglicized name of the hotel recalls the significant North American economic presence in Cuba that existed prior to Fidel Castro's government. As in Pacheco, Huerta attacks the avarice and greed associated with global capitalism. He also uses references to North American industry like "tycoon" (1) and "Wall Street" (3) to link his critique specifically to the United States.

Frank Dauster points out that Huerta struggled to harmonize his attempt at sociopolitical commitment without "falling into the rhetorical bombast that characterizes so much committed poetry" (59). In this poem, we can see how Huerta may be considered guilty of the criticism cited by Dauster. Instead of alerting the reader to the economic and political abuses accomplished through the North American presence, Huerta's attack on the United States suffers from "rhetorical bombast". His attack on

North Americans is much too personalized: While Huerta calls them “siniestros” (1), “ventrudos” (6), “dispépticos” (6), “ulcerosos” (7), and “rufianes” (9), the reader learns little about the ways that North Americans exploited the country for their own benefit.

In my opinion, what makes the poem moderately successful is the poem’s ironic final line where Huerta abruptly ends his hyperbolic portrayal of rampant North American greed and avarice: “Pensaban [los “tycoons”] inaugurarlo el primero de enero de 1959” (17). By selecting the inauguration date of the hotel as the first of January, 1959, Huerta lets the knowledgeable Latin American reader connect this day to Castro’s entry into Havana replacing the US supported Batista regime. Therefore, Huerta implicitly pays tribute to the Marxist government of Castro, by showing how his troops extricated the island from the United State’s de facto control.

While praising Huerta for the emotional intensity of his poems and his commitment to social causes, Pacheco has criticized him for letting his ideology override his talent (“Aproximación” 213). In spite of the clever juxtaposition of images between North American greed and the implicit reference to Castro’s triumphant entry into Havana, Huerta’s poem does suffer as his ideology is much too apparent. The one-sided diatribe against North Americans serves more as an outlet for Huerta’s outrage than as a forum to present intelligent, social critique by his able manipulation of language. As we see, Huerta’s poem does not allow the reader to think about the complexities of the North American involvement in Batista’s Cuba, nor does it challenge the reader to reflect on the shortcomings of Cuba’s government under Castro.

On the other hand, Pacheco’s poem, “Mercado libre,” allows the reader to consider the forces of exploitation at work within the hierarchy of powers associated with the

corporation's division of labor. The rooster, or "sultán," serves as the choice delegate of an almost invisible corporate directorship for his authoritarian rule over his "harén" (1). Although the poem's reference to "Kentucky Fried Chicken" (13) makes it clear that Pacheco is referring to North American corporate leaders, his attack is not excessively personal. Instead, by portraying how even the privileged rooster hates his North American bosses, Pacheco foregrounds the muted discontent of developing countries forced to abide by the rules of the "free" market system. Although the poet is obviously critical of the domination of markets by transnational powers, he invites the reader to consider how economic discourse, controlled by transnational interests, exploits both human and natural resources.

A number of other poems in El silencio ask to what extent the average citizen is complicit in supporting oppressive forms of discourse. For example, "Tablilla asiria," accentuates the danger to society when many of its members (the wealthy, the government officials) ally themselves too closely with institutional powers (economic, governmental, etc.), which all too often advance their own interests at the expense of the unempowered (the poor, the working class). Lacking absolute answers for even the basic questions for life, the poem's protagonist seeks comfort from some "tirano / hacia quien da respuestas a todo" (2-3). Even though the speaker's voice acknowledges his own desire for conclusive answers, the ironic tone of the poem, accentuated with passages like "Qué gratitud" (2) and "Qué alivio" (4), allows the reader to consider his or her own passive support for oppressive governments. The title of the poem refers to the 1975 discovery of ancient clay Assyrian tablets at Tell Mardikh, believed to be some of the oldest examples of recorded language. Of the 15,000 tablets found, many addressed the

basic industrial, diplomatic and economic conventions that governed ancient Assyrian society (Pettinato 45). Therefore, Pacheco foregrounds the complicity of society's citizens, who all too easily accept the conventions of their community without considering the extent of abuse covertly waged against their fellow citizens. In fact, "Tablilla asiria" challenges readers to consider in a modern context their own passive support of regimes, which are directly or indirectly responsible (indirectly through market capitalism, or directly through wars, death squads and other forms of aggression), for crimes and abuses against other human beings. He ends the poem suggesting that our passive acceptance of brutal regimes may allow these political figures to "matar a cambio del cielo / y ser premiado por crímenes" (6-7).

El silencio's concern for the serious incidents that can arise from the confrontation between competing discourses could not have been more prescient in Mexico's contemporary affairs. On January 1st, 1994, the Mexican government announced its entry into the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement, which established a free trade zone between Canada, Mexico and the United States. On the same day, the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) began a series of low intensity skirmishes with the Mexican military to publicize their opposition to the government's entry into NAFTA. The EZLN, which purportedly represents the *campesinos* in the Southern state of Chiapas, protested against the government's plans to open up their lands to wide scale cultivation by foreign interests. As a counter proposal, the EZLN called for radical agrarian reform that would allow low-scale communitarian farming favored by many of the local citizens (Pasztor 552-53). As part of their protest, the Zapatistas have taken over some of the lands that were once owned and operated by private Mexican citizens.

The landowners, unwilling to accept the ruling ideology of the EZLN, have protested their displacement from lands appropriated by the Zapatistas. To date, the disagreement between the two groups continues in a virtual deadlock. Although the conflict is far from resolved, the situation in Chiapas offers a strong case in point for Pacheco's ideological views, which demonstrate how competing discourses ultimately force the submission of one party to the will of the other.

Skeptical about the ways that modern institutions control, distribute and market discourse (laws, regulations, and other norms of society) to the individual, El silencio is also critical of the effects that the new codes and new symbols afforded by modern technological society have had on human subjectivity. In his book, (Con)fusing Signs and Postmodern Positions, Robert Neustadt echoes concerns similar to those of Pacheco by exploring the politics of representation in a contemporary context. Neustadt cites Frederic Jameson in pointing out that there has been a "massive proliferation of electronic media [that] has resulted in a confusing overload of information and signs called 'semiotic glut.' Reality can no longer be distinguished from simulation," (7) an idea that Jameson discloses as coming from twentieth century philosopher, Jean Baudrillard. Furthermore, Neustadt points out the dilemma faced by modern artists who recognize that they speak from within the same system of signification that they critique: "We cannot get outside of culture, or for that matter, a text, anymore than a text can be extracted from the world. The only possible position from which to offer critique is internal" (14). As a response, postmodern critics like Neustadt attempt to call attention to the power relations inherent in all representations (linguistic, visual, etc.) including their own.

As in Neustadt, Pacheco problematizes the effect of the proliferation of electronic symbols on human subjectivity. For example, in the poem, “Fax,” the poet reads with horror a faxed copy which he had written twenty years before. A portion of the text reads: “engendró calor que se volvió letra y fantasma. / Leí con miedo en el fax / una carta de hace veinte años” (5-7). By receiving a faxed letter that is twenty years old, the dormant information is suddenly revived in a new time and a new space. However, after the second reading, the information takes on a different meaning. Even though the faxed words return to their original form as a “letra” (5), its recreation in a new temporal and spatial context reveals to the poem’s speaker a ghost, a “fantasma” (5). Furthermore, by writing the poem in the first person, the poet acknowledges his own participation in the technological age. Although he is clearly critical of the effect that the proliferation of electrical signals have on his own subjective consciousness, like Neustadt, he recognizes that he also is intricately involved in the discursive system that he wishes to critique.

In “Orquídeas,” the poet also criticizes the effect that the electronic media is having on human subjectivity. In this poem, the speaker contrasts the distinct beauty of orchids, which are arranged next to numerous “dead” electronic objects in the living room. The orchids are “sexuales” (2) because of their aromatic smell and, perhaps, because of their shape. The poet’s descriptions of the orchid become increasingly erotic, relating the orchid to the woman’s uterus and vagina in patriarchal terms: “lo salvaje, lo vivo, / lo perdurable por efímero. / Todavía huelen a selva, / a liana, a gruta, a humedad (3-6). He also employs hyperbole to point out the excess of material comforts afforded by the electronic media. The television has a “pantalla inmensa” (13), and the videocassette player is “de lujo” (14). By juxtaposing the images of electronic items beside the

orchids, Pacheco implicitly makes a critical statement about how the human fascination with the virtual signs associated with computer technology is slowly killing off those living signs associated with nature.

Therefore, consistent with Neustadt's commentary, "Orquídeas" juxtaposes the symbols of nature alongside the symbols of modern technology, producing a confusion of images that reveal their disjunctive effect on human subjectivity. However, Pacheco takes the poem one step further. In addition to highlighting the negative effect on human subjectivity, the poem also points out the destruction that the mass consumption of technological goods is wreaking on the environment. While the orchids have been removed from their natural setting to enliven the otherwise dead room filled with electronic items, the poet points out more explicitly the environmental costs that the obsession for material goods has caused. He observes, ironically, that the mass production of material goods and food has destroyed "con su ganado y con su ganancia / la misma selva condenada a morir / que hizo posibles las orquídeas" (19-21).

Implicitly, Pacheco is criticizing economic industrialization and large farms by accentuating the disjunctive effect that the new signs associated with technological advancement and mass production are having on human consciousness. Lacking a uniform and predictable system of codes from which he may understand both himself and his relationship to the outside world, people become increasingly alienated in their modern existence. Moreover, he is also aware that his consciousness is increasingly defined and determined by the sign systems that surround him. In "La gota," the speaker compares the planet, Earth, to a drop of water. He feels captured inside the water drop and unable to escape. He asks: "¿de qué se trata, / hasta cuando, / qué mal hicimos /

para estar prisioneros de nuestra gota?” (14-17). In spite of his questions, the poetic speaker receives no definitive response. Pacheco concludes the poem: “Sombra y silencio en torno de la gota, / brizna de luz entre la noche cósmica / en donde no hay respuesta” (20-22).

Octavio Paz alludes to a similar crisis of consciousness that he interprets from the perspective of modernity. In his essay, “In Search of the Present,” Paz, contrary to Neustadt, does not make a significant distinction between modernity and postmodernity. For example, Paz asks “what is postmodernism if not an even more modern modernity” (65). He connects the search for poetic modernity in Latin America to its repeated attempts to modernize, presumably in political, economic and literary terms. Specifically with respect to literature, he traces poetic modernity back to the Symbolist period, starting with Baudelaire, who was “the first to touch her [modernity personified] and discover that she is nothing but time that crumbles in one’s hands” (65).

While Paz relates this crisis of consciousness to an overt awareness of time, he distinguishes countries like Mexico and Peru, which have an extensive, indigenous, cultural element in their populations, from other nations without a significant presence of Native Americans. For example, in Mexico, modern consciousness is constantly mediated and influenced by its indigenous past and present. Paz observes:

In Mexico, the Spaniards encountered history as well as geography. And that history still lives: it is a present rather than a past. The temples and gods of pre-Columbian Mexico may be a pile of ruins, but the spirit that breathed life into that world has not disappeared; it speaks to us in the hermetic language of myth and legend, in form of social coexistence, in popular art, in customs. Being a Mexican writer means listening to the voice of that present- that presence. (62)

Echoing Paz, Pacheco criticizes modern discourses associated with Western modernity because of their disregard of mythic states of awareness. As in Paz, Pacheco

sees the curative capacity of myth to refute the hypersensitive consciousness of time associated with modernity. In addition, Pacheco's critique of religious, political and economic discourses suggests that, as in Paz, he also associates these discourses with the West. However, Pacheco distinguishes himself from his Mexican predecessor because he does not generally relate mythical consciousness to Mexico's indigenous cultures. Instead, he normally sees art and literature as universal mediums than can recreate a mythical presence that is consistent with Paz's commentary.

"El aire oscuro" is a 25 part poem, originally written to accompany a book of illustrations, entitled Escenarios, by Mexican artist, Vicente Rojo. The poem is significant because it presents more clearly the type of mythical language that Pacheco is attempting to reflect in his poetry. A portion of the text reads:

Sueño
despojo, ignorancia
de un saber que nadie sabe.
Soñar es abandonarse
a un habitante que adentro
escribe un drama sin letra
en tinta invisible. ("12" 1-7)

The above passage points out that through dreams one can experience a state of consciousness that defies rational forms of consciousness associated with modernity. For example, knowledge produced from the dream experience is paradoxically associated with "ignorancia" (2). The third verse clearly distinguishes dream knowledge from traditional notions of rational knowledge in that it is a knowledge that "nadie sabe" (3). In addition, the dream state is written by an unknown author, paradoxically, "sin letra" (6). To dream is to leave one's conscious self -- that is, to abandon oneself to a more wholesome state of awareness.

Therefore, “El aire oscuro” implicitly advances an ideology in its opposition to discourses that promote rational ways of knowing the world. Throughout El silencio, we have seen how Pacheco is suspicious of these discourses in their autocratic claims to knowledge. The poet is critical of political and economic discourses that assert absolute claims to knowledge. Even religious dogma, when co-opted by the powers of institutional discourse, resembles rational discourses in the way that it becomes shaped and sold to the general public as an exclusive measure of outside reality. Recalling Alazraki’s commentary on Cortázar’s works at the beginning of this chapter, Pacheco is privileging a discourse that seeks an alternate awareness as a type of alternative truth experience, which cannot be fully articulated using language. He seeks a knowledge which remains dreamlike and which is irreducible to the word or signifier. Although Pacheco, as in Cortázar, never espoused vocal support for the rigid dictates of surrealism pronounced by Bretón in his first Manifiesto of 1924, much of his poetry shows an indebtedness to surrealist concepts that date back to his first poems in Los elementos. Michael Doudoroff sees this influence continuing to a small degree throughout Pacheco’s works, manifesting themselves clearly in poems such as “Sol de Heráclito” and “Bosque de marzo” (166). Certainly, like Cortázar, Pacheco views fiction and art as a medium that defies the tyranny of rational and authoritarian discourses.

In “Homenaje a la Compañía Teatral Española de Enrique Rambal, Padre e Hijo,” the poet clearly privileges the language of art and fiction over discourses that attempt to emulate everyday reality. In this poem, the poet recounts a childhood event as if it were a magical moment. He compares the fictitious representation of the theatrical company to the everyday reality associated with our rational, human existence. The text reads:

La realidad es ficción. Mentimos siempre
para sobrevivir, para evitar la guerra,
obtener la amnistía quien os absuelva del crimen
sin atenuantes ni remedio: estar vivos.

Representamos papeles, inventamos novelas de un instante,
dramas utilitarios, farsas, comedias.
Y somos los bufones a quienes se arrojan monedas,
se deja hablar o se perdona la vida. (Tarde 413-15, v. 1-8)

By demonstrating how human beings fabricate tales as part of their daily lives, the poet shows how everyday reality is also an act. He implicitly critiques modern discourse in the way that it enables people to carry out their subterfuge under the guise of honesty and truthfulness. Therefore, the poet will argue that fiction, as an art form, becomes more real since it has no pretense of truth. The speaker concludes:

Por tanto es necesaria la otra ficción:
para hallar las verdades que no intentamos decir
porque se dicen por sí solas. (9-11)

In other words, fiction, or more specifically, poetry, can reveal to the individual a brief glimpse of the “greater” truths hidden in the unconscious. In the eleventh verse, the poet abruptly changes from the pronoun, “nosotros” to the impersonal pronoun, “se”: “porque se dicen por sí solas” (11). This change is key in as much as it demonstrates how the great truths of life are not discovered through the seer-like efforts of any one individual. Instead, the truths are self evident; they preexist human inquiry and discovery in that they remain irreducible to human language.

Therefore, “Homenaje” demonstrates both the success and failure of language. Language fails as a mimetic tool to provide absolute knowledge about the world, but it succeeds in its ability to constitute alternative states of consciousness that can have significant impact on each person’s life. Therefore, many poems of El silencio

foreground language's ability to constitute this alternative state of consciousness. For example, in "<<S>>," the speaker smugly warns his colleague against mentioning the letter, "S" in a meeting: "En la reunión no la menciones por nombre. Si lo oyeran se asustarían. / Cómo aborrecen su deslizamiento sinuoso" (1-3). Rich in personification, hyperbole and alliteration, the speaker parodies the fear which the sinuous outline of the letter, "S," instills in human beings. Unlike traditional discourse that seeks a close denotative relationship between the word and the outside world, "<<S>>" creates a preposterous situation that emphasizes the absurdity of its own reality. Furthermore, language is emphasized as an artifice of self-reflexive play that may create a powerful state of awareness.

The poem is also remarkable in the way that the speaker advances a critique about the way the apparently neutral, graphic images of commonplace forms and objects may provoke powerful instinctive reactions among people. Because of its sinuous outline, that is, "su habilidad ... [de] no temer nunca al cambio" (6, 10), the letter "S" strikes a primordial sense of fear in the typical human being. Therefore, the poem repeats the idea, previously expressed in "Prehistoria," that people develop a primary sense of hostility toward those things which they cannot comprehend. The poem advances an ideology by questioning how the human's initial perceptions of good and evil are closely tied to primary instincts that generally escape our conscious understanding. However, contrary to many rational discourses, the poem does not profess an exclusive dominion to knowledge.

Even though poems like "Homenaje" and "<<S>>" promote fiction and poetry as superior forms of knowledge that may help people live in a more harmonious relationship

with the rest of the world, the poet avoids espousing an emancipatory, all-inclusive ideological platform based on myth and fiction. He realizes that at best the experience gained from these brief moments of mythic “truths” will not eradicate the egoistic drive for survival in all human beings. In the poem, “Las jaulas,” the poet portrays human existence as a circus from which we cannot escape. The text concludes that conflict is unavoidable:

La vida sólo avanza gracias al conflicto.
La historia es el recuento de la discordia
que no termina nunca.
El zarpazo bestial es tan humano
como la dentellada.
El heroísmo auténtico sería
entender las razones diferentes,
respetar la otredad insalvable,
vivir hasta cierto punto en concordancia,
sin opresión ni miedo ni injusticia.
Pero entonces, señores, no habría Circo,
no habría historia ni drama ni noticias. (32-43)

Echoing the moral relativism that was perhaps first apparent in El reposo, the first verse of this poem states that conflict is necessary for human existence. Given this absolute, the poet looks for ways to live in a world where violence is inevitable. In verses 37 through 41, the poet reveals something about the consciousness he wishes to establish through his poetry. He acknowledges the desire for peace, for “concordancia” (40). Nevertheless, in the final two verses he realizes that such a peace is not sustainable. He concludes that without conflict the world would not exist as we know it.

Aware that conflict is inescapable in our lives, the speaker of El silencio fails to offer an all inclusive, ideological program as a solution to the problems of human existence. Even so, El silencio does point out the dangers associated with discourses legitimized by society’s institutions, which generally seek to advance the interests of a select few at the

expense of the voiceless members of the world. In addition, the book's speaker teaches us to embrace the mysteries of life through poetry and myth as a way to challenge rational discourses that fail to reveal life as an enigma. In one poem of El silencio, the poet gives us a specific example about how individuals may use poetry as a form of protest against the negative consequences of traditional discourses. In "The Bubble Lady" he informs the reader in an epigraph that the Bubble lady is a woman in Berkeley, California, who sells her poems in the street blowing bubbles on people as they pass her by. The poem alludes to the Battle of Jugurtha as recorded by Roman historian, Sallust. As a historian, Sallust is noted for attempting to write history in a new, more colorful way by incorporating speeches, digressions and strong, vibrant characters in a monographic approach (Pelling 342-43). Also, his accounts of the war are noted for his criticism of the Roman nobility (342).

The poem then compares the historical writings of Sallust to the relatively obscure work of the Bubble Lady:

De lo que fue aquella época [los manuscritos de Sallust sobre la guerra de Yugurta] quedó tan solo un testimonio viviente:
The Bubble Lady.
Aun vende por la calle libros de versos.
Aun arroja al viento voraz de la historia que no perdona
sus pompas de jabón desde ese otro mundo. (7-12)

As in Sallust, the Bubble Lady may serve both as a reformer of artistic expression and as a symbol of protest. By dedicating herself to her own unique expression of art, the Bubble Lady asserts her own form of poetic rebellion against the entrenched economic and governmental powers of the North American establishment. Therefore, in his portrayal of the Bubble Lady as a living testament to Sallust, Pacheco shows how people may embrace the enigma of life, "el silencio de la luna," in ways that provide for a more

harmonious relationship between human beings and the other members of the planet. Moreover, she also serves as a symbol of protest against institutional discourses that seek to impose autocratic rules of behavior on the general public.

Therefore, as in the books analyzed in the preceding chapters, El silencio promotes a discursive ideology in the way Pacheco relates language to the presence of violence in the world. As in No me preguntes, he repeats the use of intertextual references in ways that promote the collective contribution of textual production and he continues to use bestiary poems that recognize non-human entities as equal partners in the evolution of the universe. Furthermore, similar to Desde entonces, he persists in expressing his preoccupation with the social problems of the world in an increasingly frank and direct manner. However, the abject sense of despair found in Desde entonces is gone. In El silencio, we see the fully matured voice of the poet, who willingly accepts the inescapability of violence as a basic part of human existence. In addition, the poems of El silencio accept that people may never be able to fully understand the world that surrounds us, but they also point out how mystery can be celebrated through poetry in ways that reconnect human beings, at least temporarily and in a figurative manner, to the other entities of the planet. In fact, this redemptive function of poetry, made prominent in El silencio, will be apparent in each of Pacheco's two remaining books of poetry, La arena errante (1998) and Siglo pasado (2000).

CHAPTER VI
LANGUAGE, VIOLENCE AND
JOSÉ EMILIO PACHECO'S IDEOLOGY

Dating back to his first book of poems, Los elementos de la noche (1963), José Emilio Pacheco's poetry has expressed an ideology that emphasizes language's role in shaping the moral perceptions of good and evil that human beings use in relating to the other members of the earth. As a manifestation of this ideology, his poems foreground the way that these moral perceptions manifest themselves in the attitudes, beliefs, laws and culture that affect how people communicate with the outside world. Consequently, his poetry elucidates the ways that society's predominant discourses, expressed in its political, economic and religious laws and customs, are inextricably connected to the social, political and environmental problems of humanity. In place of these discourses, he promotes his own unique form of poetic expression as a medium that moves from an acknowledgment of universal violence to a desire for a more harmonious relationship between all the entities of the world.

My previous chapters identified distinct Lacanian concepts that help explain the ideological views in Pacheco's poetry. For example, in Los elementos, the poet frequently represents the human being as divided from the other elements of the universe, which relentlessly move about him guided by an underlying force. Although critics have generally ascribed this outside force to Heraclitus' notion of *logos*, when read

metapoetically, we can see how these external elements may be interpreted as the violent collision of linguistic signifiers in the subject's unconscious that recall the ideas of Jacques Lacan.

Pacheco's representation of the human individual echoes Lacanian thought in several ways. For example, the speaker's conscious awareness of, and interaction with the outside world engender a pervasive feeling of separation from the latter. The human individual's acquisition of language follows closely on the heels of this initial experience of separation, thus recalling Lacan's Mirror Stage. Since the individual's conscious self is separated from an unconscious realm where linguistic signification actually occurs, his existence as a linguistic, speaking being only reinforces his separation. From this Lacanian basis, Pacheco's ideology and ethics reveal themselves more clearly. The individual begins to develop a moral sense of right and wrong, which is in actuality based on the individual's own egoistic desires for control and mastery. He imposes these moral views on people, animals and natural environment around him. Based on my reinterpretation of Lacan, this perspective, which relates the inescapable sense of division of the human subject to the discursive way he understands the world around him in moral terms, is apparent throughout all of Pacheco's poetry.

In Pacheco's first poems, we also see an ideology grounded on an ethics that subscribes to a type of moral relativity. For example, violence, which manifests itself in the form of the constant agitation and confrontation of the universe's elements, becomes necessary for these elements to continue evolving. In fact, people are inescapably part of this system of violence, since their own desire for self-preservation pushes them into conflict with the other members of the world community. Language becomes the tool

through which opportunistic people develop their rules and customs that they will impose on less empowered entities. These less empowered entities may be human, such as ethnic minorities or women, or they may be non-human, such as the natural environment and animals. For instance, at the end of El reposo del fuego (1966), the poet reveals how language is used during the Spanish Conquest to enable the destruction of Mexico's land and the repression of the country's native people by the Spanish invaders. Therefore, Pacheco's ideology expresses a dichotomy. He is critical of people in the way that language deludes them into believing that their own values and beliefs are fundamentally superior to all others. However, he also sees human beings as instruments of nature, inevitably caught within the cycle of violence just like all of the other entities of the cosmos, which allows the universe to exist in a perpetual state of transformation.

The discursive elements of the ideology within Pacheco's poetry share many affinities with postmodern ideas such as those elucidated by Jean-Francoise Lyotard and Linda Hutcheon. Lyotard defined postmodernism as an "incredulity toward metanarratives" (xxiv) that rejects totalizing, large scale philosophies associated with the Enlightenment; the latter exalt the ability of people to resolve through reason the ongoing problems of the world. Lyotard is interested in the way that systems and institutions have legitimized knowledge. He is particularly critical of the institutions of science, logic and metaphysics associated with the Enlightenment that have legitimized themselves with their emphasis on a "possible unanimity between rational minds ... in which the hero of knowledge works toward a good ethico-political end- universal peace (xxiii- xxiv). In place of the metanarratives of the Enlightenment, Lyotard favors particularized truths, which he calls "local determinism" (xxiv).

Hutcheon affirms Lyotard's rejection of metanarratives (38), but she emphasizes the importance of complicity as a component of postmodern thought. That is, she reveals how postmodern thinkers have brought attention to the ideological representations in all language, including their own. In addition, Hutcheon, like other postmodern thinkers, observes how postmodernists emphasize language's shortcomings in reflecting the outside world objectively. Therefore, postmodernists tend to deemphasize and even criticize language as a truth-revealing mechanism. Instead, postmodernists such as Hutcheon emphasize language's ability to constitute new and differing states of awareness (18).

Although some scholars have criticized approaches that relate a Western postmodern model to Latin American texts, José Miguel Oviedo points out that the Latin American poets of the sixties were experiencing a moral dilemma between the need for direct social commentary and the more morally ambiguous aspects of postmodern thought (Historia 386, 421). While little has been written specifically regarding the postmodern presence in Latin American poetry, as by Mario Valdés, I suggest that Pacheco is one of the most postmodern poets of Latin America.⁴⁵ Recalling Lyotard, Pacheco is particularly wary of the way rational discourses have lulled humans into accepting the beliefs, practices and institutions associated with modern, "rational" existence without adequate consideration of the costs that these practices have wreaked on the world in terms of loss of life, environmental destruction and economic exploitation. Echoing Hutcheon, Pacheco's own self-reflexive writing continuously reminds us of his own complicity in ideological

⁴⁵ Valdés observes comments that Pacheco is one of "the remarkable postmodern poet writing today in any language (463).

expression in that he recognizes that he is also advancing an ideology, which in turn may have significant ethical, social and political consequences.

Pacheco's third book, No me preguntes cómo pasas el tiempo (1969), which I examine in the second chapter, moves into more direct social poetry as evidenced by an authoritative subject who repeatedly criticizes economic and military imperialism in countries such as the United States and Mexico. By introducing a centered, authoritative speaker, the early poems of No me preguntes betray the strict postmodern and Lacanian representations of his previous two works, which generally featured an impersonal and divided subject. Furthermore, these initial poems clearly depart from a strict postmodern position akin to Lyotard by denouncing the military and economic aggression of the United States and praising the actions of Marxist fighter, Che Guevara, who he refers to as a hero ("En lo que dura"). Other poems, such as "Un defensor" and "En lo que dura," demonstrate Pacheco's willingness at times to assume a clear ideological position that is uncomplicated by notions of complicity that would recall Hutcheon's understanding of postmodern thought. In fact, the ideological position taken in poems like "En lo que dura" and "Un defensor" not only underscore key contextual differences between Pacheco postmodern texts and that of French philosopher, Jean-Francoise Lyotard and Canadian, Linda Hutcheon, but they also confirm Pacheco's comment that the events of the time make ideological critique in poetry almost necessary ("Aproximación" 218).

In spite of the strong ideological critique in the first part of No me preguntes, midway through the book, Pacheco begins to employ a variety of literary strategies that include epigraphic references, translated texts, poems by heteronyms and bestiaries that dismantle

the authoritative speaker, which had been present in the book's earlier poems. Pacheco's intertextual explorations come on the heels of Julia Kristeva's seminal work, Séméiotiké (1969);⁴⁶ they are also consistent with both Lacanian and postmodern theory by showing textual production as a merger of previous texts (or signifiers) occurring outside of the control of the conscious writer. In fact, Pacheco's use of intertextual devices becomes a central part of his ideology that attempts to realign the human subject in a more egalitarian position with respect to other people. Furthermore, his use of bestiary poems in No me preguntes encourages a more equitable relationship between humans and the non-human entities of the planet.

Desde Entonces (1980), which is analyzed in the third chapter, continues Pacheco's previous experiments with intertextuality, but these poems distinguish themselves by looking to the past in an effort to find an example of a more peaceful existence. These poems show the poetic subject as trying to reengage with the past, which he views from a nostalgic, or even idyllic, perspective. Therefore, the poet looks to his own youth, to the "simpler" times of his forbears as well as to prehistoric periods for a better model of human existence. However, his search for an Edenic-like period of bliss is futile. The guarded optimism of No me preguntes has changed to a tone of futility. The poems of Desde entonces are filled with words of negations that accentuate the poetic speaker's own sense of despair.

The longest poem of the Desde entonces, "Jardín de niños," written in twenty parts, is remarkable in the way that the poet demonstrates on a broad scale an ideology that relates the role of subjectivity and language from a Lacanian perspective to the social and

⁴⁶ In an essay of this book, "Word, Dialogue and Novel," Kristeva introduces her concept of intertextuality pointing out that any text is the "absorption and transformation of another [text]" (37).

political problems experienced by humanity. For instance, the poem initially shows the young human as a fetus struggling for survival. Later, after encountering his own mirror image, the maturing individual feels threatened by the elements of the outside world. Similar to Pacheco's first book, Los elementos, this confrontation with the outside world accentuates the individual's divided existence, which is closely followed by his acquisition of language. His existence as a speaking being allows him to develop an ethics, moral codes and beliefs that he will use to advance his own subjective desires at the expense of the competing interests of those around him. The individual's struggle is increasingly represented in a social and political context. By referring to the existence of torture camps in "el sur de América" ("18" 6), the poet demonstrates how language and subjectivity, alluded to throughout the poem's previous passages, ultimately manifest themselves in social, historical and political circumstances as violence and repression. Therefore, as in the other poems of Desde entonces, "Jardín de niños" ends on a disenchanted note. The past has provided no utopian models for existence, and the poetic speaker is condemned to live in the present without any definitive models for human behavior. He recommends that people reject romantic notions of peace in the past and use their own shared sense of disenchantment as a basis from which they may live in a more peaceful relationship with all of the entities of the earth.

In El silencio de la luna (1994), analyzed in the fourth chapter, the poet continues to espouse an ideology that relates language to the social and political problems of the world. For example, in key poems like "Prehistoria," Pacheco initially represents the human subject as a prehistoric individual, who instinctively reacts violently against the perceived threats of the outside world. He ultimately connects this instinctive act of self-

preservation to its absorption into Biblical discourse by showing how Christians have used religious texts from a patriarchal perspective to oppress women. Other poems address the relationship between language and violence in modern, technological society. For instance, “Orquídeas” demonstrates how the desire for electronic products is desensitizing human awareness of the natural world around us. In addition, the poem points out how the mass consumption of electronic items is also contributing to the destruction of the environment.

Some poems reveal how the institutions of modern society (religion, commerce, government) have exacerbated the amount of violence in the world. Rather than creating a fully just and equitable society, these institutions reflect the imposition of the desires and interests of an empowered few on the underrepresented entities of the earth, such as women, cultural and ethnic minorities, animals or plants. However, even though El silencio is critical of these institutional discourses, the book avoids the bleak despair that haunts the pages of Desde entonces. In fact, many poems of El silencio promote an alternative consciousness to those associated with political, economic and religious discourses, by celebrating art and myth, through poetic language, as a privileged means of communication. For Pacheco, poetic language that promotes art and myth may limit or avoid the negative consequences often associated with more divisive and egoistic discourses found in economics, politics and religion. For example, “Homenaje a la Compañía Teatral Española de Enrique Rambal, Padre e Hijo” shows the childhood experience of viewing a play as a significant life-forming experience. In this poem, theatre and poetry serve to bring people together in a type of spiritual union. Unlike economic, political or religious discourse, there is no confrontation between individuals

because there is no imposition of one's self-centered interests on those of the other. In addition, other poems such as the "The Bubble Lady" even suggest how an individual may use poetry and art as a form of non-violent protest against the oppressive force of modern institutional discourses.

While the previous four chapters have outlined Pacheco's underlying preoccupation with language and its relationship to the political and social problems of the world, his attempt to find a more harmonious existence for human beings must be viewed as both a success and failure. Even though Mario Vargas Llosa has commented that Pacheco "afirma una y otra vez que la poesía contiene lo mejor del hombre" (40), Pacheco does not believe that poetry or art may serve as an all inclusive medium that can resolve the enduring problems of the world. In fact, Pacheco never provides an all encompassing ideological program as a cure for the ills of society. Although he consistently values poetry as a privileged form of communication, Pacheco does not believe that poetry will produce revolutionary results in human behavior. In his penultimate book, La arena errante (1998), the author discreetly expresses why people may not be able to accomplish a collective form of behavior that could constitute a utopian society. Not surprisingly, Pacheco presents his views in the form of a bestiary:

Prefiero ser hormiga.
En las inmensas columnas
nada que me distraiga de mi deber en la tierra.
No hay lugar para el yo,
para el amor más terrible que es el amor propio. ("Hormiguedad" 1-5)

In this poem, the collective society of ants and their ability to serve particularized roles for the common good of their society as a whole represent a model to which people could aspire. It is this "antlike" obliteration of self and commitment to community that is

perhaps the end goal of Pacheco's verse. Contrary to humans, the ant serves its community without any consideration of its own personal desires. For example, lines 4 and 12 clearly differentiate the ant's collective commitment to collective living from the human focus on the self ("yo") or the individual ("individuo").

Pacheco's ideology once again relates human existence to language-bearing beings in a social framework towards the end of "Hormiguedad." He concludes his poem on a resigned note, highlighting language here as the distinguishing feature between the human individual and the goal of animal (ant) collectivity: "Los humanos, en cambio, nunca / podrán hablar así de ellos mismos" (13-14, my emphasis). By stressing speech, "hablar," as the distinguishing factor between people and animals, Pacheco says that it is the unique use of language that prohibits people from submitting their own will to that of the common good of the community. In this poem, Pacheco proposes that language reasserts one's existence as distinct from the rest of the group's, thereby making absolute conformity to collective rule impossible. Therefore, even though poetry may serve as a superior medium through which people may help engender some sense of harmony with the other members of the planet, "Hormiguedad" affirms Pacheco's ideology by representing language as a unique, human characteristic that ultimately reinforces human existence as separate individuals, thus preventing full assimilation into a collective society.

Consequently, the analysis of the relationship between language, violence and ideology in these four chapters demonstrate not only Pacheco's continuing preoccupation with the social, ethical and political problems of humanity, but they also reveal four distinct periods of Pacheco's poetic corpus. For example, Pacheco's first two volumes of

poetry, Los elementos (1963) and El reposo (1966) express a basic ideology regarding the relationship between language and violence. In No me preguntes (1969), he continues to examine the implications of the ideology established in his first two books by initially employing an authoritative speaker who actively criticizes American involvement in Vietnam and the Mexican's government massacre at Tlatelolco Square. However, these protest poems are followed by a series of intertextual devices and bestiary poems that undermine the authoritative speaker present in the first part of the No me preguntes. Although Desde entonces (1980) carries on the intertextual experiments and bestiaries that were common in No me preguntes, Desde entonces distinguishes itself from No me preguntes in its pervasive sense of resignation regarding humanity's inability to coexist peacefully with the other members of the world. While this profound sense of resignation persists in books published subsequent to Desde entonces, the author begins to find hope in the redemptive capacities in art and myth. The author expresses this optimism most clearly in El silencio de luna (1994). In showing how people may use art and fiction as an alternative discourse to religious, economic and political discourse, El silencio marks a fourth and final stage of Pacheco's poems, which the poet will continue through his final book, Siglo pasado (2000).

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